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## BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

A SKETCH OF THEIR HISTORY.

BY

ROSS G. MURISON, M.A., B.D.,

L. CTURER IN ORIENTAL LANGUAGES, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, TORONTO.

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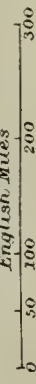






ASSYRIA  
& THE ADJACENT LANDS.

English Miles



Longitude East of Greenwich

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# CONTENTS.

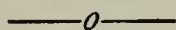
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	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	7-9
1. The terms Ancient and Modern History.—2. The relations of the nations.—3. The records; how preserved.	
CHAPTER I.—ANCIENT BABYLONIA . . . . .	10-17
4. The Semites.—5. The beginnings of Babylonia.—6. Date of Sargon.—7. Story of Sargon.—8. The empire of Sargon.—9. The time of Sargon.—10. Shumer and Akkad.—11. Lagash.—12. Ur of the Chaldees.—13. Abraham and his time.—14. The four kings.	
CHAPTER II.—UNITED BABYLONIA . . . . .	18-21
15. Chammurabi.—16. The Kasshites.—17. The Tel-el-Amarna tablets.—18. Contents of tablets.	
CHAPTER III.—RISE OF ASSYRIA . . . . .	21-24
19, 20. Settlement of Assyria.—21. The struggle for supremacy.—22. Revival of Assyria.—23. Assurnazirpal.	
CHAPTER IV.—CONTACT WITH ISRAEL . . . . .	25-29
24. First appearance of Chaldæans.—25. Battle of Karkar.—26. Campaigns in Syria.—27. Shamshi-Ramman.—28. Ramman-Nirari III.—29. Semiramis.—30. Period of decline.	
CHAPTER V.—CONSOLIDATION OF ASSYRIAN EMPIRE . . . . .	29-35
31. Tiglath-pileser —32. Judah's supremacy.—33. Fall of Damascus.—34. Chaldæa overrun.—35. Samaria besieged.—36. Captivity of the Ten Tribes.—37. Conquest of Syria.—38. Affairs in Babylon.	
CHAPTER VI.—SENNACHERIB . . . . .	36-45
39. Sennacherib.—40. Judah ravaged.—41. Siege of Tyre.—42. Philistia and Judah.—43. Jerusalem again in danger.—44. Destruction of Assyrian army.—45. End of Merodach-baladan.—46. Babylon destroyed.—47. Assassination of Sennacherib.	

	PAGE
CHAPTER VII.—ESARHADDON . . . . .	46-49
48. Accession of Esarhaddon.—49. Babylon restored.—	
50. — Egypt conquered.— 51. Barbarian inroads. —	
52. Death of Esarhaddon.	
CHAPTER VIII.—ASSHURBANIPAL . . . . .	50-56
53. Asshurbanipal. — 54. Campaign against Egypt.—	
55. Tyre and Elam.—56. Rebellion in Babylonia.—	
57. War with Elam.—58. Campaign in Arabia.	
CHAPTER IX.—FALL OF ASSYRIA . . . . .	56-59
59. Median invasion.—60. The Scythians.—61, 62. Fall	
of Nineveh.	
CHAPTER X.—NEW BABYLONIA . . . . .	60-67
63. Sources of history.—64. Nabopolassar.—65. Babylon	
and Judah.—66. Tyre and Egypt.—67. Babylon the	
Great.—68. Nebuchadrezzar's madness.—69. Nebuchad-	
rezzar's successors.	
CHAPTER XI.—FALL OF BABYLONIA . . . . .	67-73
70. Nabonidos.—71. Cyrus.—72. Fall of Babylon.—	
73. Submission of Babylon.—74. Inscription of Cyrus.—	
75. End of Semitic empire.	
CHAPTER XII. — GENESIS ACCORDING TO THE	
MONUMENTS . . . . .	73-83
76, 77. Creation.—78. Tiamat.—79 Fall of Man, and	
Tree of Life.—80. The Sabbath.—81. Tower of Babel.—	
82. Flood story.	
CHAPTER XIII.—RELIGION . . . . .	84-93
83. The Pantheon.—84. The chief gods.—85. Other	
gods. — 86. Demons. — 87. Incantations.—88. Omens.—	
89. Temples and Priests.—90. Future Life.—91. Sheol.—	
92. State of the Dead.—93. Descent of Ishtar to Hades.	
—94. Return of Ishtar.	
CHAPTER XIV.—WRITING AND LITERATURE	94-104
95. Writing signs. — 96. Decipherment. — 97. Writing	
materials.—98. Contents.—99. Hymns.—100. Penitential	
Psalms.—101. Myths and Legends. — 102. Gilgamesh	
Epic.	
CHAPTER XV.—CIVILIZATION . . . . .	104-115
103. The Sumerians.—104. Sceptical Opinions.—105. The	
cradle of civilization.—106. Astronomy.—107. Reckoning	
of time.—108. Architecture.—109. Commerce and Agri-	
culture.—110. Place of woman.—111. The Status of	
Slaves.—112. Past and Present.—113. Review of Civiliza-	
tion.—114. Conclusion.	



# BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA.



## INTRODUCTION

I. THE terms Ancient History and Modern History are relative ones. To us an occurrence of a hundred years ago is but as a tale of yesterday, while to a savage it would seem to belong to very ancient history, if it were not already pre-historic. Going back along the line of our own civilization we have been accustomed to halt at Israel, Greece, and Rome, and call the career of these nations ancient, as if beyond them there had been no history. But the discoveries of the past century in the valleys of the Euphrates and the Nile have shown that the records of these nations, though dealing with a time so far removed from our own, are yet but modern history compared with the story of Babylonia and Egypt. Even the Exodus which took place a century before Homer's time, stands but midway between the present and the time of Sargon I.; and that ancient monarch stands but midway between the Exodus and the beginning of the history of his country.

2. The history of Babylonia is of interest to all of us, if we would know the story of our own civilization. No nation can attain to the highest development by its own unaided efforts, but must build upon, or incorporate the attainments of others. Our civilization, the highest the world has yet seen, has been reached, because it is founded on the Law of Rome, the Art, Science, and Philosophy of Greece, the Morals and Religion of Israel. But these were not original with Rome, Greece, and Israel. Thousands of years had to elapse, and great progress had to be made before the time came for them to do their work. In this preparation the greatest factor was Babylonia. From her Greece and Israel borrowed largely, and having improved that which they borrowed handed it down to the ages of which we are the heirs. Greece owes the very beginnings of its civilization to Babylonia, or to peoples influenced by that land ; and Israel was touched at every important point, from its beginnings to the end of the exile, by Babylonia and Assyria. Thus the history of Babylonia has had a part in moulding our own ; it forms, in a sense, the first chapter of the story of our civilization.

3. The materials for writing a history of Assyria and Babylonia have been preserved for us in a most remarkable way. Their great palaces and temples, when left uncared for, soon fell into decay and collapsed. In a short time the surface of this heap of ruins became reduced again to soil, and in the rainy season was covered by vegetation, so that in time the mound came to look like a natural

elevation. Thus buried, the interior was preserved, both from the ravages of the atmosphere, and from destruction by ignorant men. Thus it remained almost down to our own time, when in an age of scholars and explorers, the monuments thus preserved have been discovered and deciphered. From them the secret of the wonderful advance in civilization made in such a short time by Greece and Rome has been disclosed. So, too, the history of Israel down to the Return can be largely reconstructed by their aid, and made to us the history of a people, not that of a mysterious abstraction. The story of these ancient empires of the Euphrates and the Tigris, and the recovery of their records emphasize as perhaps the story of no other nation does the great truth that all history, whether ancient or modern, ecclesiastical or secular, is sacred history, for it is the record of events which worked together for, and took part in, the carrying out of God's great plan for the world. Thus it is a book of that revelation of Himself which He has given, and is continually giving, to the children of men. It is a revelation of His omnipotence and omniscience, His wisdom and gracious providence written so plainly that all may read it. Yet it is only when men have been taught by the special revelation which God has given of Himself through His servants the Prophets, and through His Son our Lord that they are able to understand its message.

## CHAPTER I.

## ANCIENT BABYLONIA.

4. **THE SEMITES.**—The Babylonians are a division of the great Semitic race, of which the Jews and the Arabs are the only important branches left. In early pre-Christian times, however, the Semites were the most influential of all the races upon the earth. In the foundation of the Egyptian civilization they also played an important part. The Semitic world was divided into two great parts, the Northern and the Southern. The families composing these two groups were :—

*A.* NORTHERN SEMITES.

- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| I. Babylonian.   | 1. Old Babylonian. |
|                  | 2. Assyrian.       |
|                  | 3. Chaldæan.       |
| II. Aramæan.     | 1. Mesopotamian.   |
|                  | 2. Syrian.         |
| III. Canaanitic. | 1. Canaanites.     |
|                  | 2. Phœnicians.     |
| IV. Hebraic.     | 1. Hebrews.        |
|                  | 2. Moabites.       |
|                  | 3. Ammonites.      |
|                  | 4. Edomites.       |

*B.* SOUTHERN SEMITES.

- |                 |
|-----------------|
| I. Sabæans.     |
| II. Minæans.    |
| III. Arabs.     |
| IV. Ethiopians. |



**5. THE BEGINNINGS OF BABYLONIA.**—At what era the Babylonians became permanently separated from the common Semitic stock, and settled in the valley of the Euphrates cannot now be determined. It cannot have been later than 7000 B.C., and was probably much earlier. Objects dating from about 6000 B.C. have been found. The names of several kings who reigned long before 4000 B.C. are known to us, the most prominent being that of one Lugal-zaggisi, who made himself ruler of the whole land of Babylonia. The dates of none of these can yet, however, be accurately determined, and it is not until the time of Sargon that clear light falls upon our path, though even after his day we have often dark places to traverse.

**6. DATE OF SARGON.**—Sargon, King of Akkad, reigned about 3800 B.C. This is the first date in the world's history about which there is no serious dispute. This date is made certain by an inscription of Nabonidos, the last native King of Babylon, who was a zealous restorer of ruined temples. He tells us that he succeeded in reaching the foundation stone of the ancient temple of the Sun in Sippar, a stone which the great Nebuchadnezzar had sought in vain to find. Under it was the seal-cylinder of the founder of the temple, Naram-Sin, son of Sargon, which, says Nabonidos, had not been seen for "thrice a thousand, twice a hundred years." The date of the discovery of this cornerstone was about 550 B.C. We thus reach 3750 B.C. as the date of Naram-Sin, and by adding fifty years for the reign of Sargon we get 3800 B.C.

**7. STORY OF SARGON.** — Besides certain

stories of later times, in which the name of Sargon is surrounded by a halo of romance, many memorials of both father and son have been found, from which a fairly accurate knowledge of these kings may be gathered. The story of Sargon, purporting to be told by himself, is interesting because of its close similarity to part of the history of Moses. "I am Sargon, the mighty king, the King of Akkad. My mother was of noble birth, my father I know not of. My mother of noble race bore me in secret. She placed me in a basket and closed up the opening with bitumen, she cast me into the river which did not overflow me. The river carried me to Akki, the irrigator. Akki reared me up to boyhood, and made me a gardener. While I was a gardener, the goddess Ishtar showed me favour. For forty-five years I ruled over the black haired race," (*i.e.* the Semites). From this narrative it is supposed that Sargon was a usurper, not of princely birth, and therefore he does not mention his father, but claims to rule legitimately through his mother.

8. **THE EMPIRE OF SARGON.**—In the reigns of Sargon and Naram-Sin, conquests were made not only in Elam and Babylonia but as far west as the Mediterranean. Sargon spent three years in the west land procuring wood and precious stones for his temples and palaces, and it would appear that he even visited the island of Cyprus. Inscriptions and remains of these kings confirm what was said by later historians, and show that Eastern Arabia was also conquered. The career of the all-powerful Sargon was renowned in succeeding ages, and he occupied in the history of the Babylonians

the same place as David did in that of Israel. He was always to them the ideal king, and it was the ambition of every king to be a second Sargon, and like him to gain and hold the whole western land of Asia.

9. **THE TIME OF SARGON.**—The career of these two kings opens up to us a fascinating view of the world, and gives us a new conception of time itself. Instead of seeing the first man still in the full vigour of life, and the second generation yet mere infants, we see the human race widely extended, divided into many peoples, and speaking many tongues. Eden appears to us, not a land of solitudes, inhabited by but a few folk, but the centre of a mighty busy empire, which extended from “the River even unto the ends of the earth,” and included Elam, North and South Babylonia, Eastern Arabia, Syria, and Palestine. The tall cedars of Lebanon were already famous, and were transported all the long way to Babylonian cities to be used for the building of temples. The vessels of the Phœnicians, and the caravans of the Aramæans had already begun the work which they were to carry on for so many centuries in the Semitic world. For at least two millenniums before the “father of the faithful” set out from Ur and journeyed to the far distant land of Canaan, the road he travelled had often been traversed by armies and caravans.

10. **SHUMER AND AKKAD.**—Northern Babylonia was known in very early times as Akkad, and the central portion as Shumer, the Shinar of Genesis x. The city of Akkad, which Sargon

had made so glorious, sank from being the metropolis of the land, and for long the pre-eminence passed from city to city until finally Babylon took the lead, and kept it. For nearly two thousand years as the capital of Babylonia it gave its name to the whole country. Other cities of importance were: Sippar, where the sun god was adored; Kutu, the Cutha of 2 Kings xviii. ;<sup>1</sup> Nippur (modern Nuffar) which lay upon the banks of the famous Shatt-en-nil canal.<sup>2</sup> Here Bēl (Ba'al) had his seat, and this makes it probable that Nippur was the first Semitic settlement in Babylonia, because Bel worship is the oldest and most universal among the northern Semites.

11. **LAGASH.**—In South Babylonia Lagash (modern Tello) is shown by recent discoveries to have been the first city to rise into importance. It attained to the supreme power between 3500 B.C. and 3200 B.C., although possibly its earliest kings antedate Sargon. The most famous king of Lagash known to us was Gudea (Nabū), of whom many remains have been found. This king tells that he obtained cedars from Mt. Amanus in Syria up to seventy cubits in length; the materials for his statues he obtained in north-east Arabia, and gold and precious stones in north-west Arabia. His ships brought him precious woods and other merchandise from Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and probably Egypt.

12. **UR OF THE CHALDEES.**—Between 2900

<sup>1</sup> The Jews nicknamed the Samaritans Cuthæans, because so many people from Cutha had been deported to Samaria to replace the Israelites carried into exile.

<sup>2</sup> Delitzsch thinks this canal was the Gihon, one of the four rivers of Eden.



B.C. and 2500 B.C. Ur (modern Mugheir) attained to the supremacy, and Lagash became its tributary. Ur was the chief port of its time, being situated on the great Pallakopas ship canal, which is probably the Pishon of Genesis ii. This canal connected it with the Persian Gulf and with Babylon, and near it were two other large canals united with the Euphrates. Ur was thus the great distributing centre of the commercial world of its time. It was also religiously important, being the chief seat of the worship of Sîn the moon god, the patron deity of merchants and travellers.<sup>1</sup> Ur in its turn lost the supremacy which it held over all Babylonia, and its place was taken by Larsa, the Elasar of Genesis xiv.

**13. ABRAHAM AND HIS TIME.**—In the period of Larsa's sovereignty occurred an invasion by the Elamites, and Babylonia was forced to submit itself to these hardy highlanders. This invasion took place about 2300 B.C.<sup>2</sup> The completeness and severity of the overthrow and subjection of the land is shown by the deep impression it left on the traditions and literature of the people. It is in this period that Abraham lived,<sup>3</sup> and the events related in Genesis xiv. appear to have taken place between 2270 and 2250 B.C. The Bible story throws a

<sup>1</sup> Harran (cross-roads town), the great inland trade centre to which Abram went when he left Ur, was also dedicated to Sîn.

<sup>2</sup> The date of the Elamitic invasion is made certain by Assurbanipal, who relates that in 650 B.C. he recovered from Susa the image of Ishtar, which Kudur-nanchundi, King of Elam, had carried off sixteen hundred and thirty-five years before.

<sup>3</sup> The name Abram is a Babylonian one, and has been found on the monuments.

bright gleam of light upon the condition of things existing in both Babylonia and the west land. Chedorlaomer, King of Elam, comes with three of his vassal kings and an army to put down a revolt which has taken place in the most westerly part of his empire. Successful in putting down this attempt to regain independence, the victors are returning home with much booty and many captives, when they are suddenly set upon and thoroughly routed by the powerful nomadic sheikh Abram.

14. **THE FOUR KINGS.**—From this passage we see the Euphrates valley under a foreign yoke, and its kings forced to go to the assistance of their suzerain in his campaigns. The conqueror has taken up the traditions of the conquered land, and is not satisfied with Babylonia itself, but must also be master of the west land. Chedorlaomar (that is Kudur-lagamar) is a purely Elamitic name, Lagamar occurs as the name of one of the gods of Elam, and Kudur seems to mean “servant.” Arioch, king of Elasar, is also a historical name, that of Eri-aku (servant of the moon god), son of Kudurmabug, King of Larsa. The name Tidal (Tudchal) has been found in the inscriptions, though not identified with this king; his kingdom, which is called Goiim (“nations” A.V.) was most likely Guti, the country lying to the north of Babylonia, between it and Assyria. Amraphel, King of Shinar, can be none other than the great Chammurabi,<sup>1</sup> a king who began a new epoch in the history of the land.

<sup>1</sup> The *ch* is to be pronounced in all proper names as the *ch* in the Scots word “loch.”

## CHAPTER II.

## UNITED BABYLONIA.

**15. CHAMMURABI.**—A deliverer from the foreign domination arose for Babylonia in the person of Chammurabi, 2264-2232 B.C., one of the greatest and noblest rulers Babylonia ever had, and one of the great kings of all time. He rallied around him the native patriots, and after a severe struggle drove out the aliens. He then set himself bravely to the even harder task of uniting the people into one whole, and so well did he succeed, that for nearly two thousand years North and South Babylonia formed but one nation. He made his own capital, the city of Babel (Bab-ilu, the gate of God) the capital of the united kingdom, and this it remained till Babylonia was no more. Chammurabi was also unwearied in his endeavours to increase the welfare of his land and people. He made a great canal, calling it by his own name, which enriched the country by irrigating it, and by reclaiming arable land from the marshes. He also built great dykes to prevent the periodical inundations. In many ways he proved himself a wise king, and a great benefactor of his land. He was succeeded by his son, Shamshi-iluna (2232-2197 B.C.), who walked in the ways of his father. Four rulers after him completed this the first dynasty of Babylon (2400-2098), and thence till 1730 B.C. there is as yet no record except a list of kings.

**16. THE KASSHITES.**—From 1730-1153, Baby-

lonia was again under the domination of a foreign power, and an alien dynasty sat upon its throne. The country was gradually over-run by the Kasshites, a people kindred in race to the Elamites. Their country is the Cush, which should be rather read Kosh, of Genesis ii. 13, and must not be confounded with Ethiopia, the Old Testament name of which is Cush. The long duration of this foreign power in Babylonia is very remarkable, but it made no change in the characteristics of the people. The names of the kings of this period are foreign, but the Babylonians by their civilization conquered their conquerors, who became in all things essentially Semitic. The Kasshites were finally driven out after a rule of nearly six hundred years by Nebuchadrezzar I. of Babylon.

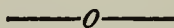
17. **THE TEL-EL-AMARNA TABLETS.**—The extent of Babylonia's influence upon the nations has been revealed to us not by itself, but by its great rival Egypt. In that land at a place now called Tel-el-Amarna, in 1887, a peasant woman searching in the loose sand for curios to sell to tourists, picked up a piece of brick strangely inscribed. This was seen by scholars to be a Babylonian tablet written in Babylonian characters. Search was at once instituted, and some three hundred and twenty tablets or fragments have been found, and are now deposited in museums, or are in the possession of private individuals. They belonged originally to Amenophis IV. (1383-1365) commonly called the Heretic King. In the sixth year of his reign this monarch became converted to the worship of Aten, the



sun's disc, a worship comparatively pure and almost monotheistic. With all the zeal of a young convert he determined that his land should also be converted, and therefore prohibited all other worship. He changed his name to Khu-n-aten, and removed his royal residence from Thebes, and founded a new capital at Tel-el-Amarna. But the old was too strong for the new. The reformation was a failure, and the successors of Amenophis had to return to Thebes, leaving the palace at Amarna to fall into ruins. Now these ruins are giving up their contents, part of which are the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, letters written to Egyptians, many of them by Egyptians, but all in the Babylonian character.

18. CONTENTS OF THE TABLETS.—A number of these letters show Egypt at the height of her power. They are mostly taken up with alliances and commerce, and in them marriages and gifts play an important part. The principal correspondent in this group is Dushratta, King of Mitani in Mesopotamia, whose daughter Amenophis marries. This king is a friend (perhaps a relation) of Tyi, the famous Asiatic mother of Khu-n-aten, who was possibly the cause of his conversion. But most of the letters deal with less pleasant themes, and show the decline of the Egyptian power in Syria. They are letters sent from native Egyptian officers or vassal princes in Syria and Palestine, telling of the defection of viceroys, the attacks of enemies, giving excuses for not paying tribute, or urging the king to send help, else all would be lost. The fact that all these letters, even

those by Egyptians to their king, are written in Babylonian, shows that Babylonian was at this time the official diplomatic language, and was studied and known by the people, as Latin was in Europe in the Middle ages. One of the tablets is a mythological fragment punctuated with red points evidently Egyptian, which would seem to show that it had been used as a school copy for the instruction of Egyptian youth. Ebed-tob, governor of Jerusalem (Urushalim) is the chief correspondent from Palestine, which is evidence that this city which David captured, and made his capital, was from very early times a city and stronghold of importance.



### CHAPTER III.

#### RISE OF ASSYRIA.

19. From the north about the middle of the second millennium before Christ, an unexpected rival to Babylonia appears, and a new actor comes upon the stage of history. Babylonia must decrease while its rival Assyria increases until after a long and sore struggle the old land becomes for a time subject to the younger. Until the fall of Nineveh, 607 B.C., we shall now touch upon the history of Babylonia only in connection with that of Assyria.

20. THE SETTLEMENT OF ASSYRIA.—The Assyrian monarchy, from its first appearance in

history until its complete annihilation, lasted about a thousand years, a period very short compared with that of Babylonia, though long compared with the life of any modern nation. The Assyrians were a purely Semitic people, and no foreign dynasty ever sat upon their throne. Their great and outstanding characteristics were energy and love of power. The struggle between Assyria and Babylonia was long and severe, in fact a life-long conflict, for it never ceased until the death of Assyria. Assyria was a colony of Babylonia (*cf.* Gen. x. 11 f., which gives the true tradition), but separated and settled in very ancient times on the Tigris, calling the first town Asshur, which later became the name of the whole land. The settlement in the north could not have been much later than 3000 B.C., and was possibly made long before that date. Asshur is mentioned very early, and the purity of the Assyrian people points to a very ancient separation from the Babylonians, who by Elamitic, Kasshite, and other intermixture, became less purely Semitic

#### 21. THE STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY.—

Ishme-dagan (*c.* 1840 B.C.) and his son Shamshi-Ramman are the first Assyrian kings whose names we know. About 1500 B.C. Thothmes III. of Egypt received presents from Assyria, but did not invade the land. Before this date, after a lengthy conflict, Assyria had become independent of the mother land, and in 1480 the two kings of these countries entered into a treaty, binding themselves each to care for his own bounds, and abide within his own borders.

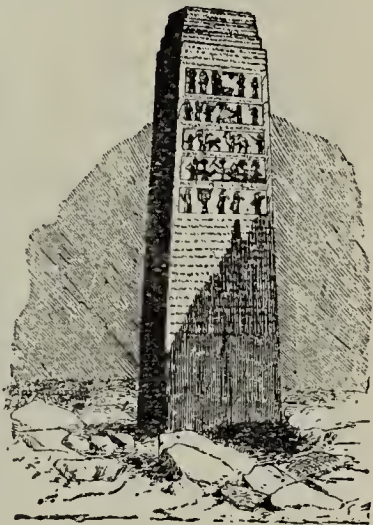
This treaty was renewed by their successors, but about 1380 B.C. the two nations were again at war. Assyria was the aggressor, and made a rebellion in Babylonia the excuse for interference. Ramman-nirari I. (c. 1345) extended the Assyrian empire very greatly. His son Shalmaneser I. (1330) was the real founder of Nineveh. He changed his capital from the city of Asshur in the south, which had until his time been the royal residence, and founded the city of Kalach. Tiglath-adar (c. 1290) calls himself the conqueror of Babylonia. After his reign, however, a period of decadence set in, in which Babylonia regained its independence, and for several centuries after received as its lord no Assyrian king. The border country between these two lands was, however, continually the scene of fierce and bloody conflicts.

22. REVIVAL OF ASSYRIA.—Under Ashur-dan (1190 B.C.) Assyria entered on a new era of prosperity. This king carried out a successful campaign against Babylonia, but was unable to subdue it completely. This his grandson did in his reign by defeating Nebuchadrezzar I., a famous and powerful king, who had driven the Kasshites (§ 16) out of Babylonia. For five hundred years after this the old land had to submit to be a subordinate power. Tiglath-pileser I. (1120-1100 B.C.) was one of the most noted kings of ancient times. The whole country north of Syria and Mesopotamia, from Lake Van, to the Mediterranean, he says he made "of one mouth," that is, he made to give homage to the one king, himself. He also ravaged the land of Babylonia, and carried off



much spoil. This king, like his proto-type Nimrod, was a mighty hunter—lions, elephants, and wild cattle being his favourite game. He also did much to improve and beautify his land, among other things he laid out large parks, and brought for them from the various conquered countries foreign trees, plants, and animals.

**23. ASSHURNAZIR-PAL.**—The next hundred and fifty years show only a decline of the empire mainly through the inefficiency of its rulers. In 890 B.C. a more strenuous prince, Tuklat-adar, came to the throne, and set himself the duty of establishing order at home, and of recovering the territory con-



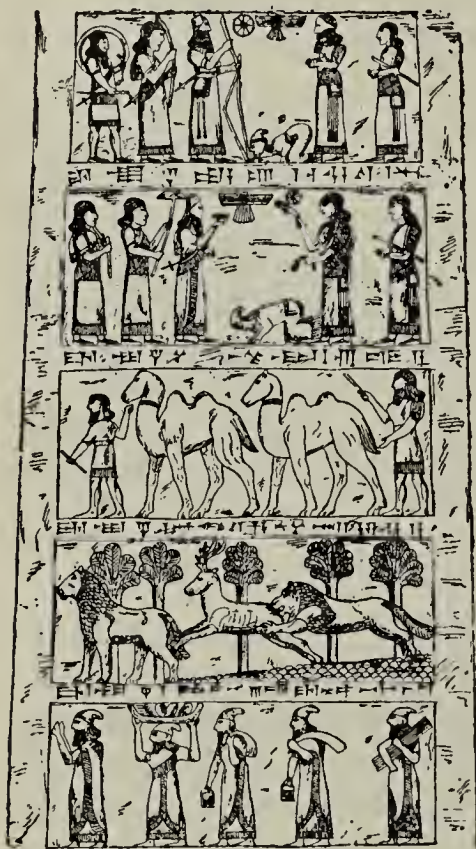
“Black Obelisk” of Shalmaneser II. (c. B.C. 850).

quered by Tiglath-pileser. This king was succeeded by his son, Asshur-nazir-pal (884-860), many monuments of whom are now in the British Museum. He was one of the most cruel and most vindictive of all the kings who sat upon the throne of Assyria. His inscriptions are wearisome reading, for they are one long list of “bloody, brutal wars.” Seldom do we read of pity or mercy being shown to prisoners, but death and all sorts of tortures were their portion. In spite of his cruel disposition and his many campaigns he had still time for the digging and dredging of canals, the building of temples and palaces, and the promotion of art.

## CHAPTER IV.

## CONTACT WITH ISRAEL.

24. FIRST APPEARANCE OF CHALDÆANS.  
 —Shalmaneser II. (860-825) is of interest to us,



The pictorial part of one side of the "Black Obelisk." The top group represents the tribute of Zua, King of Gozan; the second that of YAHUA, i.e. Jehu, "Son of Omri," King of Israel.

because under him Israel first came into direct contact with Assyria. He was contemporary with Jehosaphat, Joram, Ahaziah, and Joash of Judah, Ahab, Joram, and Jehu of Israel, Benhadad and Hazael of Damascus, and Mesha of Moab. The reign of this king was one long war. Every year witnessed a campaign, and for twenty-six years the king led his army in person. His place at the head of his soldiers was taken when he gave up the personal lead by a famous and successful

"turtan," or commander-in-chief, Asshur-dan. In 853 civil war broke out in Babylonia, there being two claimants for the throne. Shalmaneser put

down the trouble, and made one of the claimants his vassal king. What makes this war noteworthy (for civil wars of this kind were too common to be every one chronicled) was the appearance in history for the first time of the Chaldæans (Kaldē, Hebrew Kasdīm). These were a purely Semitic people, who dwelt on the borders of the Persian Gulf, and from this time till the fall of Babylon they played an important part in history through their constant opposition to Assyrian aggression.

25. **BATTLE OF KARKAR.**—The great ambition of Shalmaneser was the subjugation of the whole of the west land, and energetically he set himself to the task. He crossed the Euphrates twenty-four times, and made nineteen campaigns into Syria. After he had conquered many of the districts in North Syria a league was formed against him in 854 by Hadad-idri (Benhadad) of Damascus, and Ahab of Israel, with help from Ammon, Arvad, Arabia, and other regions. A great army of chariots, horses, camels, and infantry was collected, and met the Assyrian army at Karkar, north of Damascus. The league suffered defeat, but the victory must have cost the Assyrian dearly, as he did not attempt to follow it up by besieging any of the cities of the allies. This battle gives a starting point for the reckoning of Biblical chronology. The only time when Ahab and Benhadad could have been in alliance was during the truce which they made with one another, and which lasted for the three years immediately preceding the death of Ahab (1 Kings, chs. xx.—xxii.). Ahab's death thus occurred soon after the

battle of Karkar, probably the following year, 853 B.C. From this date the reigns of previous kings in Israel and Judah may be reckoned.

26. CAMPAIGNS IN SYRIA.—Twice again, in 849 and 846, Shalmaneser invaded the west land, and was met each time by a powerful combination led by Benhadad. In both wars the allies were defeated, but in neither case was the Assyrian able to follow up the victories. Israel did not join again with the Syrians in either year. After the campaign in 846, the other lands became discouraged and submitted to Assyria, leaving Damascus to face the invaders alone. Hazael, the regicide and usurper (2 Kings viii. 15), made a brave stand against them, but was unsuccessful. They besieged Damascus and destroyed the fine parks which surrounded it, but the city itself they could not capture. In 842, Shalmaneser was again in Syria, and received tribute from Tyre, Sidon and Israel. One of the sculptures on the famous black obelisk of Shalmaneser (now in the British Museum) represents Hebrews bringing tribute and gifts to the Assyrian leader, while underneath is written: "Tribute of Ya-u-a apil Chu-um-ri" (Jehu, son of Omri). Jehu became the vassal of Assyria in order to be defended from the Aramæans; but independence was sold for naught, for Shalmaneser finally left the west land to itself, and Damascus became for a time the ruling power in western Asia.

27. SHAMSHI-RAMMAN, 825-812.—When this king came to the throne the outlook was gloomy. During the first two years of his reign he was occupied in putting down a rebellion led by his brother,



who, like Absalom, tried to dethrone his father, and make himself king in his stead, possibly for fear that, at the death of Shalmaneser, the powerful "Turtan," Asshur-dan (§ 24), would seize the supreme power. This civil war raged for four years during the father's reign, and for two years during that of the son. Shamshi-ramman's work was mainly consolidation. His father had attempted too much, and though many lands had submitted themselves, they were not really conquered. Babylonia unsuccessfully rebelled during this reign, allying herself with the Elamites, Chaldæans, and nomadic Aramæans.

28. **RAMMAN-NIRARI III.** (812-783 B.C.) is possibly the "saviour" spoken of in 2 Kings xiii. 5, because he so weakened the power of Damascus that Israel obtained relief from its old enemy, and thus regained prosperity. This king extended the empire beyond all previous bounds. He conquered all the lands as far as the Caspian Sea, and Tyre, Sidon, Omri-land (Israel), Edom and Philistia submitted to him. He conquered Damascus also and carried off from it an enormous spoil.<sup>1</sup>

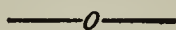
29. **SEMIRAMIS.**—In Kalach(modern Nimroud), a statue of Nebo (Nabu), the Babylonian deity has been found, with a prayer inscribed on it, in which occurs the name of Shammu-rammat, the wife of Ramman-nirari. This lady is the only queen mentioned by name in the Assyrian historical inscrip-

<sup>1</sup> The catalogue of his spoils may indicate the wealth of an ancient Semitic city state. He states that he carried off from Damascus 2500 talents of silver, 20 talents of gold, 3000 talents of bronze, 5000 talents of iron, much clothing, ivory and other valuables.



tions, and must therefore have been a woman of great influence. She seems to have been of the royal house of Babylonia, which may account for both the statue and her importance. She is now generally held to have been the original of the "Semiramis" of the Greek legends, the Greek form of the name being very similar to the Babylonian.

30. **PERIOD OF DECLINE.**—Under the three following kings Assyria lay as if completely exhausted. Country after country fell away from allegiance. Misfortune speedily followed misfortune in the homeland. These events were accompanied by many fearful omens which dismayed the people. The most momentous of these portents occurred, we are told, in the year corresponding to 763 B.C. in our reckoning, when, "in the month Sivan (June) the sun was eclipsed." The exactness of Assyrian chronology receives striking confirmation from this statement, for astronomers have made calculations, and have found that on the 15th of June 763 B.C. there occurred a total eclipse of the sun, visible in Assyria.



## CHAPTER V.

### CONSOLIDATION OF THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE.

31. **TIGLATH-PILESER.**—The country was raised from its low estate by a bold usurper, Tiglath-pileser III. (745-727), who had probably

been a general in the army. His name was Pūlu, but at his accession he adopted the more historic designation by which alone he is known in the Assyrian inscriptions. In the Babylonian annals both names occur, as also in the Old Testament (2 Kings xv. 19, 29 ; 1 Chron. v. 6, 26). This king did much to extend the empire, but his greatest achievement was its consolidation. He saw clearly that the most difficult question to solve was not, how to conquer, but, how to hold when conquered. To solve the latter problem he developed the practice of deportation, which from his time became the settled policy of the empire. If a state submitted voluntarily, or with little opposition, a certain amount of tribute was imposed, and so long as this was paid, its internal government and administration were in no way interfered with. If the vassal state rebelled and ceased paying tribute, when reconquered, a heavier tribute was imposed, and a king or ruler appointed by Assyria. Upon further rebellion the contumacious land was ravaged, and its best people carried off to a remote part of the empire, their places being filled from another region treated in like manner. This policy was usually effective in breaking down the national spirit and the national religion which, with the Semites, was always bound up with the land. It is a strong evidence of the divine vitality of the Jewish faith, that not only was it not destroyed by the exile, but it came forth stronger and purer from that ordeal which destroyed completely the religions of so many kindred peoples.

32. JUDAH'S SUPREMACY.—After subduing

the Aramæans and Chaldæans who had been stirring up strife in Babylonia, Tiglath-pileser came in 743 B.C. against the west land. Here a great confederacy, led by Armenia, was formed against him, and for three years unceasing war raged. Finally Arpad, a fortress near Aleppo, was taken, and made the headquarters of the Assyrian army ; and soon after Cilicia Cappadocia and the Hittites were forced to submit. During the weakness of Assyria Judah seems to have been the leader in inducing its neighbours to throw off the foreign yoke, and in this period it attained to its highest power. A fragment of Tiglath-pileser tells that he restored to Asshur nineteen districts which "in sinfulness and vileness had allied themselves to Azariah."

33. **FALL OF DAMASCUS.**—After this Judah was isolated from its neighbours, and rapidly lost prestige. The weak Ahaz became a voluntary vassal of the "great king" in order to be defended from Pekah of Samaria, and Rezin of Damascus, with whom he refused to enter into alliance (2 Kings xvi. 5). In 734 Tiglath-pileser was again in Syria. In this campaign he laid waste and annexed numerous districts at the "entrance of Omriland" (Israel), some of which can be identified with those mentioned in 2 Kings xi. 29. All the Philistines submitted except Chanun of Gaza, who fled to Egypt. In Gaza the victor erected his statue as the symbol that all the land up to this point was his. Egypt being now effectually blockaded, the Assyrian king could give his attention to the two allies, Israel and

Damascus. Israel was the first to suffer. Many of its people were deported, its treasures carried off, its King Pekah assassinated, and Hoshea set up in his place (*cf.* Isa. vii.). Hoshea was the appointed of the conqueror, who says of him in an inscription, "Pa-ka-cha their king they had killed, A-u-shi-a I made king over them." The army of Damascus was completely routed, and Rezin had to flee "like a hunted stag" into the city. The whole territory of Damascus was ravaged, and over five hundred towns devastated, and made "like ruin heaps after the flood." The capital itself fell in 732, and with its fall came to an end the only historical Aramæan kingdom. In this ancient metropolis, which had so long and so bravely defied the Assyrians, the victorious king held an imperial levee. To this function all the kings in the west-land came to do homage, and bring gifts, among those mentioned being Ya-u-ha-zi (Jehoahaz or Ahaz) of Judah (2 Kings xvi. 1).

34. **CHALDÆA OVERRUN.** — In 733 Babylonia was again in the throes of civil war, two brothers claiming the throne. No sooner was one brother killed, and the other crowned, than a Chaldæan, Ukin-zir by name, seized supreme power, and made himself king. Tiglath-pileser hastened southwards, drove out the Chaldæan from Babylonia, and overran his home territory, carrying off over 100,000 people and their possessions. The other Chaldæan chiefs submitted, among the number being Merodach-baladan of Bible story (1 Kings xx. 12; Isa. xxxix.), who became later one of the most formidable enemies any

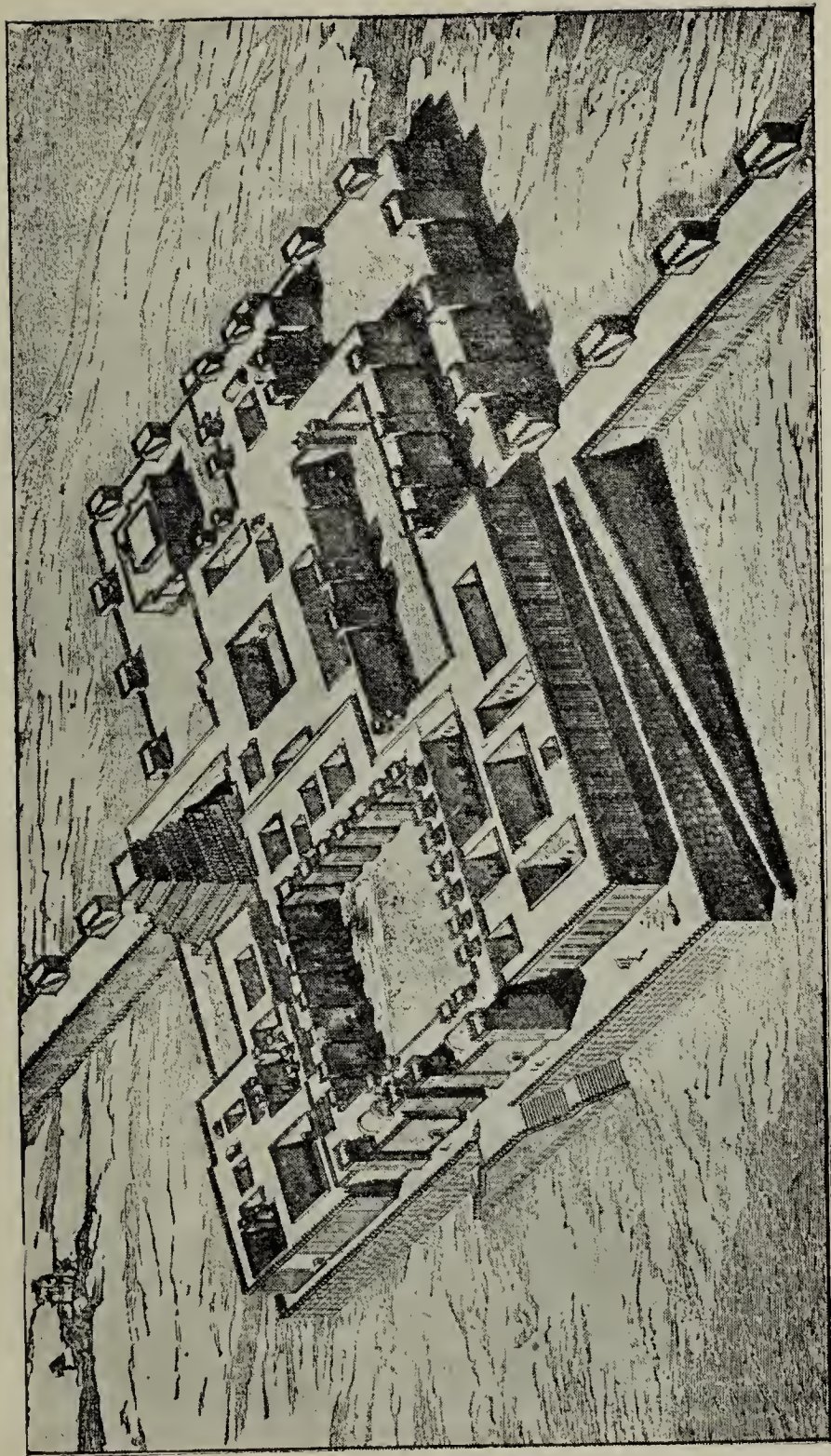


Assyrian king had ever to cope with. During the latter years of his life, Tiglath-pileser spent much time in architectural and other enterprises for the beautifying and strengthening of his residence at Kalach.

35. **SAMARIA BESIEGED.**—Of the brief reign of King Shalmaneser IV. (727-722) we know very little. In the beginning of his reign his army operated in Syria, imposing obedience and collecting tribute (2 Kings xvii. 3). On the withdrawal of the Assyrian troops, Hoshea of Israel began to intrigue with Seve (So) one of the nomarchs or kinglets of Lower Egypt. When this came to the ears of his suzerain, that monarch decided that the time had come to make a complete end of the restless land of Israel. The country was overrun, and siege was laid to the city of Samaria in 724. Samaria was so strongly fortified by both nature and art, that it could be brought to submission only by starvation; and after a brave resistance, the inhabitants had to surrender in 722. In the meantime, Shalmaneser had died, and the siege was concluded under his great successor, Sargon (2 Kings xvii. 6).

36. **CAPTIVITY OF THE TEN TRIBES.**—Sargon (722-705), the founder of the last and greatest dynasty of Assyria, was a usurper, though perhaps a prince of the blood royal. He proved himself to be a brave soldier, an astute general, and a most successful statesman. His first kingly deed was to complete the final act in the life of the kingdom of North Israel. "In the beginning of my reign, I besieged, I captured Samaria, 27,290





Sargon's Palace at Khorsabad.  
(Restoration by V. Place.)

inhabitants I carried off." The exiles were settled in Mesopotamia, and in the highlands of Media, where they were gradually absorbed by the peoples among whom they dwelt, and disappeared completely, and for ever.<sup>1</sup>

37. CONQUEST OF SYRIA.—But the spirit of the west land was not yet broken. The whole country "seethed with hate and discontent against the Assyrian." This hatred was kept alive and augmented by Egypt, which was jealous for her sovereignty of the Mediterranean, and had begun to fear for her own safety. Her emissaries were therefore continually at work stirring up sedition and rebellion against Assyria, and promising help which she seldom gave (*cf.* Isa. xxx. 7). She was thus able to keep Syria as a shield or buffer between her and her more powerful rival. The King of Hamath revolted, and incited Arpad and Damascus to do likewise, but he was defeated, captured, and slain. Chanun of Gaza (§ 33) with Seve of Egypt (§ 35) took the field, but it was to meet crushing defeat. Chanun was taken prisoner, while Seve fled and "was no more found." In 711 the King of Ashdod rebelled, and was dethroned (*cf.* Isa. xx.). His brother was made king by Sargon, but the people would have none of him, and placed a Grecian on the throne. This man

<sup>1</sup> Compare the numbers carried into exile from Samaria when the north country perished with those carried off by Sennacherib, in the reign of Hezekiah (200-150, § 40), when Judah did *not* go into exile. It will thus be seen that only a very small proportion of the population of the Ten Tribes went into captivity, but all the leaders were included, which probably accounts for the loss of the national spirit.

soon had to flee to the Sinaitic peninsula, but so great had become the terror of Assyria that he was extradited. Philistia was then formally annexed, and the whole westland was for the time being thoroughly subdued.

38. AFFAIRS IN BABYLON.—The conquest of Babylonia proved to be a much more difficult undertaking. Here the brave Merodach-baladan, in alliance with the Aramæans and the Elamites, had seized the throne. In 721 Sargon marched southward, and a battle was fought which must have been indecisive, for Merodach-baladan was allowed to retain the throne. When Sargon had subdued all his enemies in the north, east, and west, he had his hand free to deal with the south. He now marched against “the blasphemous usurper, who, for twelve years, had against the will of the gods, ruled and tyrannized over Babylonia.” In this campaign Sargon displayed his fine generalship, defeating first Elam, and then the Chaldæans. He was then solemnly invited to enter Babylon, which he did amid great rejoicings. By restoring neglected public works, especially the canal between Babel and Borsippa, and by clearing the neighbourhood of predatory tribes, he won the hearts of the Babylonians. In 705 this great king died by the hand of an assassin, a common soldier, and therefore the tool of some powerful person, possibly the king’s own son



## CHAPTER VI.

## SENNACHERIB.

39. **SENNACHERIB** (Sîn hath multiplied the brothers, 705-681) has long been one of the best known kings of Assyria, because of his prominence in the Bible story. The character he bears in that book is the same as that revealed in his own inscriptions, "boastful, arrogant, cruel, revengeful to a degree uncommon even in Assyrian kings." Babylonia first claimed his attention, for Merodach-baladan had taken advantage of unsettled times to seize the throne again. For six years the Chaldæan had been planning for his return, and now successful, he began to strengthen himself by making alliances with his neighbours. All in vain; the Assyrians marched into Babylonia, and Merodach-baladan fled to the marshes, where he could not be found, though for five days diligent search was made. Chaldæa was ravaged, 75 walled cities and 420 villages were devastated and their inhabitants deported. The nomadic Aramæan tribes suffered in like manner, and 208,000 souls, young and old, male and female, with over a million cattle were carried off. Bel-ibni, who, "like a little dog had been brought up in my palace," was made king in Babylon, but he was intended to be a mere puppet.

40. **JUDAH RAVAGED.**—The year 701 witnessed a very important campaign in the westland. The story as told by the "Great King" himself is as

follows : "In my third campaign I marched to the Hittite land (westland). Luli (Elulæus), King of Sidon, the fear of the brilliancy of my sovereignty overcame him, and far into the midst of the sea he fled, and his country I occupied. Great Sidon, Little Sidon, Bitzitti, Sarepta, Mahalliba, Ushu, Akzibi, Akku, his strong cities, his fortresses, granaries, reservoirs and barracks, the strength of the weapons of Asshur my lord overwhelmed him. Tubal (Ethobal), on the royal throne over them I set, and perpetual tribute I established upon him. Menahem of Shamshiruna, Ethobal of Sidon, Abdil of Arvad, Uru-milki of Gebal (Byblos), Mitinti of Ashdod, Pudu-ilu of Ammon, Chemosh-nadab of Moab, Malikram of Edom, all the kings of the westland, rich presents, heavy gifts they brought me, and kissed my feet, Zidka (Zedekiah) of Ashkalon, who had not submitted to my yoke, the gods of his father-house, himself, his wife, his sons, and daughters, brothers and kindred I deported, to Assyria I took them. Sharru-ludari, their former king, over the men of Ashkalon I placed ; the giving of tribute and gifts I imposed, and he drew on my yoke. In the course of my expedition, Beth - dagan, Joppa, Banai - barkai, Azuri, cities of Zedekiah, which to my feet promptly had not submitted, I besieged, I took, I carried off their booty. The governors, nobles and inhabitants of Ekron, who, Padi, their king by covenant oath of Assyria, had cast into iron chains, to Hezekiah of Judah they gave him, who hostilely in a dungeon had shut him up, their heart feared. The King of Egypt the bowmen, chariots, and



horses of the King of Melucha, a countless host to their assistance they invoked and they came to their help. In view of Elteke against me they set their battle array, and appealed to arms. In the reliance of Asshur, my lord, with them I fought, and accomplished their defeat. The captain of the chariots, and the sons of the King of Egypt, together with the captain of the chariots of Melucha alive in the midst of the tumult of battle with my own hand, I took. Elteke and Timnath I besieged, I took, I carried off their spoil. To Ekron I approached. The magistrates and nobles who had committed sin (*cf.* 2 Kings xviii. 14, A.V.) I killed, and on stakes around the city I impaled their corpses. The inhabitants who had done sin and evil, I counted as booty. The rest of them who had not sinned, and no guilt had, I amnestied. Padi their king out of the midst of Ur-sa-lim-mu (Jerusalem) I brought, and upon the royal throne over them I set, and the tribute of my sovereignty upon him I placed, and Hezekiah the Judaite who had not submitted to my yoke, forty-six of his fenced cities—strongholds ; and villages without number around them by breaking them down with battering-rams, axes. . . . I took. 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, camels, asses, cattle, and small cattle without number I brought out and counted as spoil. Himself like a caged bird in Jerusalem his capital I shut up. Forts against him I made, and any coming out of the gate I caused to turn back. His cities which I had plundered, I cut off from his land, and to Mitinti of Ashdod, Padi of Ekron,

Šil-bel of Gaza, I gave them, and so lessened his territory. To their former tribute . . . I made an addition and imposed it on them. As for Hezekiah himself, the fear of the lustre of my sovereignty overwhelmed him, and the Arabs, and his warriors whom for the defence of Jerusalem his capital he had brought, they were struck with fear. Together with thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, precious stones . . . great lapis-lazuli stones, sofas of ivory, thrones of ivory and elephant hide, ivory . . . wood . . . wood, and such like, an immense treasure, his daughters, his palace women, men singers, women singers, to Nineveh, my capital, I made him bring ; and he sent his ambassadors for the bringing of tribute, and the doing of homage" (*cf.* 2 Kings xviii. ; Isa xxxvi.).

41. SIEGE OF TYRE.—I have quoted the above passage in full because it is of interest to students of the Old Testament, and gives also a good example of an Assyrian historical inscription with its minuteness of detail and its boastfulness. From it we learn that the whole Westland was in revolt, with two chief centres of disturbance, Tyre in the north, and Jerusalem in the south. Phœnicia was the first to be called to account, and it sorely suffered for its sins against Assyria. It is, however, noteworthy that among the places ravaged no mention is made of Tyre, the most important of all. The only explanation that can be given for this omission is that the Assyrians attempted, but failed, to take the island city. That they would attempt to take it, is probable ; that they would have boasted of its capture is certain. Here most

likely belongs the account of Meander quoted by Josephus (*Ant.* IX. xiv. 2):—"The Phœnicians (Sidonians) furnished him (the King of Assyria) with sixty ships and eight hundred mariners; and the Tyrians came upon them with twelve ships, dispersed the enemy's ships, and took five hundred prisoners. The reputation of all the citizens of Tyre was thereby increased; but the King of Assyria returned and placed guards at all their rivers and aqueducts to prevent the Tyrians from obtaining water. This continued for five years, and still the Tyrians bore the siege, and drank water from wells which they dug." Josephus says this occurred in the reign of Shalmaneser, but that is probably a mistake.

42. PHILISTIA AND JUDAH.—Philistia next received attention from Sennacherib, who captured its cities, and deported many of its best people. The relations existing between Judah and this land, its ancient enemy, are interesting. In Ekron, the king Padi had been appointed by Assyria, and remained faithful to his oath, but the nobles and people rebelled and delivered him over to Hezekiah, which means that the king of Judah was accepted by them as their suzerain. But Hezekiah, when the day of stress came, was unable to help them, being himself in sore need of help. The land of Judah was ravaged, and its capital saved from siege, and possibly from capture by the payment of a very heavy fine. A relief has been found which shows Sennacherib at Lachish (*Isa.* xxxvi. 2) seated upon his throne, and receiving tribute from the conquered peoples. The Jewish

features of some of the tribute-bearers are quite evident.

43. JERUSALEM AGAIN IN DANGER.—In spite of Hezekiah's formal and complete submission Sennacherib soon after determined to destroy Judah as a kingdom. Why he should thus break faith we do not know ; possibly he wished to make Jerusalem, what nature had evidently intended it should be, an Assyrian fortress of great strength near the borders of Egypt ; or it may be that his spies brought him word that the Egyptian party in Jerusalem were again plotting with Egypt. Be the reason what it may, he sent three of his chief officers, the "rabshakeh," the "rabsaris," and the "turtan,"<sup>1</sup> to the city gates to demand its surrender (2 Kings xviii. 17-37 ; Isa. xxxvi.). The rabshakeh's speech on this occasion is a marvel of diplomacy, skilfully uniting promises to the common people, with taunts and threats to the king and court ; and showing an intimate knowledge of the inner life of the Judaites, and the religious questions which were then agitating them, owing to the reforms brought in by Hezekiah. Jerusalem refused to surrender, and before troops could be spared for its siege, the Assyrians had hastily retreated back to their own land.

44. DESTRUCTION OF ASSYRIAN ARMY.—What was the cause of this sudden retreat ? The Old Testament historian, omitting, as is usual with

<sup>1</sup> The Rabshakeh (rab-shaqē, lit. chief of the dignities) was a title probably equivalent to the Roman "legatus," which included the office of both general and legate. The rabsaris (rab-sha-rishē, lit. chief of the heads) was probably analogous to a major-general, and the turtan to a brigadier.



Semites, all reference to second causes, says an Angel of Jehovah smote the camp (Isa. xxxvii. 36; 2 Kings xix. 35-37) and this has generally been interpreted as meaning that the intervention was miraculous, and the cause of death mysterious. In the Egyptian tradition as preserved by Herodotus, the event is also regarded as being caused by a supernatural intervention. This tradition tells how in the night time, when the army of Egypt, and the army of Sennacherib lay over against one another, the God Ra sent an army of field mice into the Assyrian camp, and these creatures gnawed apart the bowstrings and the shield and quiver straps, so that when the day dawned the Assyrians were helpless before their enemy, great numbers of them were slain, and the rest fled. This legend explains both itself, and the Bible narrative, when it is remembered that the mouse is a symbol of disease and pestilence (cp. 1 Sam. vi. 4 ff.). The providential cause of the Assyrian flight was therefore a plague which broke out in the army of Assyria with great virulence, and carried off so many men that the king in terror fled, with the remainder of his army to his own land. Pelusium, which according to Herodotus was the scene of the destruction of the Assyrian cohorts, has always been notorious, and dreaded as a plague spot with its bogs and marshes.<sup>1</sup> Here the proud hosts of Assyria met the pestilence, truly a destroying angel, sent from a stronger than

<sup>1</sup> This is the famous Serbonian bog of the Romans. Many armies in both ancient and more modern times have suffered here from the plague.

the god Asshur, and the army "melted away northwards." That Sennacherib regarded this as a manifestation of the power of the god of the land is seen in the fact that though he reigned for twenty years after this disaster, he never again came in person to the west, and it is doubtful if he ever sent another expedition to the ill-omened land of Palestine.

45. **END OF MERODACH-BALADAN.** — Sennacherib now determined completely to root out Merodach-baladan and his supporters, for, as long as that "pretender" lived, Assyrian rule in Babylonia was insecure. In 700 an expedition marched against the Chaldæans, many of whom submitted, while many others fled to the Chaldæan refuge, the marshes, where troops could not easily follow them. Merodach-baladan seeing himself unable to hold out against the stronger power of Assyria gathered together all his belongings, his ancestral gods, and the bones of his forefathers, and with his people retreated to Nagitu in the farthest marshes by the sea. We hear no more of this doughty patriot, who, although often defeated, was never conquered. His one ambition was to wrest the sceptre of Babylonia from the Assyrians, and to wield it himself as king. To accomplish this he waited, watched, and intrigued, keeping himself informed of events throughout western Asia, letting no opportunity pass, and no advantage remain unused. An example of how closely he watched events, even in distant parts is seen in his relations with Hezekiah (Isa. xxxix. ; 2 Kings xx. 12 ff.). When the king of Judah was recovering from a

severe illness, an embassy from Merodach-baladan arrived, bringing gifts and congratulations. In the east, gifts have always had a language of their own, and Hezekiah understanding what the true purpose of the embassy was showed the Chaldæans all the glories of his capital, to prove to them that he was an ally worth having.

46. **BABYLON DESTROYED.**—Babylonia was full of discontent, for the people feared that the Assyrians intended to make the ancient land a mere adjunct of Nineveh in commerce, culture, and religion. The Chaldæans fanned this discontent, by keeping up a constant guerilla warfare from the marshes. The Assyrian kings boast often that they overcame difficulties never before overcome, and Sennacherib resolved that the hitherto inaccessible marshes should no longer be an asylum for the Chaldæans. Although his soldiers knew nothing of naval warfare, he made captives from Tyre, Sidon, and Cyprus build for him “lofty ships, after the manner of their own country,” and in these he successfully drove the Chaldæans from their haunts, and returned laden with spoil. Thinking he had Babylonia now secure, he withdrew his troops; but no sooner was this done than the Elamites invaded the land, and carried off Sennacherib’s brother, whom he had made king. War followed, in which Elam was defeated, and its king carried captive to Nineveh. In the confusion which followed a Chaldæan, Shuzub, contrived to seize the throne of Babylon, and was cordially welcomed by the native patriots, as a leader against the common enemy Assyria. In alliance with Elam,

then under a very able king named Umman-menanu, a severe check, if not defeat was administered to Sennacherib in 691. Unfortunately in 689 Elam's king was rendered helpless by a stroke of paralysis, and soon Sennacherib's vengeance fell swift and terrible upon Babylon. The inhabitants were either butchered, or sent into captivity, and the city itself burned, levelled to the ground, and the waters of the Euphrates turned upon its site. This was one of the world's great calamities, for untold treasures in art and literature must have perished with this ancient seat of culture.

#### 47. ASSASSINATION OF SENNACHERIB.—

For eight years more Sennacherib ruled, most of his time being occupied with public works in Nineveh, some of them good, but the majority of them selfish and provincial. On the 20th of Tebet (December) 681, as the "Great King" knelt at the shrine of Nusku (O.T. Nisroch) the terrible god of war, his patron deity, to whom he fondly imagined he bore a strong resemblance, the old man was done to death by two of his sons, Nergal-shar-usur, and Adar-Malik, (O.T. Sharezer and Adrammelech, Isa. xxvii. 38). The revolution thus inaugurated, was deservedly unsuccessful and the two parricides fled to the highland fastnesses of Armenia.



## CHAPTER VII.

## ESARHADDON.

48. **ACCESSION OF ESARHADDON.**—The second son of Sennacherib, Esarhaddon (Assurhath given a brother, 681-668) was not in Nineveh at the time of his father's assassination, but immediately hastened home to execute vengeance, and secure the throne. "Like a lion I raged, my heart was in a tumult. To the great gods my lords I raised my hands, and they hearkened unto me, saying, 'Go, tarry not, at thy side we are marching.'" He hastened on, he further tells us, heeding neither snow nor cold, looking not back, taking not off his clothes nor the harness of his horses. On meeting the rebels they voluntarily submitted to him, and through all their ranks they said, "Let that man be our king." Being thus chosen king by popular vote as well as by divine election, Esarhaddon seated himself upon the throne of his father, and proved himself to be not only a great soldier and general, but a wise and benevolent ruler.

49. **BABYLON RESTORED.**—The two greatest achievements of this king were the restoration of Babylon and the conquest of Egypt. He endeavoured in every way to make the incensed Babylonians forget his father's shameful action, the blame for which he adroitly fastens on the gods and the Chaldæans. The gods, he says, were angry at the impiety of the Chaldæan king of Babylon in giving tribute to Elam, and forsook

the city, Merodach, Babylon's patron god, first devastating land and city, and decreeing that for eleven years, his own mystic number, it should lie waste. At the end of this period the god returned, and called "me Esarhaddon this building again to restore." Thus summoned he restored the city, and erected temples in it, and by a policy of conciliation did much to win the people to himself. He was careful in all things to gratify their patriotic pride, and hence never styles himself king of Babylon, but vice-gerent. This policy of conciliation he carried into his dealings with other peoples. A son of Merodach-baladan, who voluntarily came and submitted to him, he made viceroy over his ancestral domains, and thus won a faithful vassal. He also made peace with the Elamites, who restored gods they had at one time carried away.

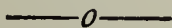
50. **EGYPT CONQUERED.**—In 677 Phœnicia was invaded, and Sidon which had for a long time remained faithful, but had finally rebelled, was destroyed. A new city which the conqueror called by his own name, was erected, and peopled with exiles brought from the east. Tyre, however, again proved itself too strong for the Assyrians. A determined siege was laid to it from the land, but the sea, with which the Assyrians could do nothing, was to the Tyrians a powerful ally, for to them it was an open way, and supplies could thus always be procured from the colonies. The rest of Syria offered no opposition, and all its kinglets brought tribute. The names of twenty-two of these princes are in the inscriptions, among them being that of

Manasseh of Judah. But Egypt was the goal which Esarhaddon had always in view, and as a first step to its subjection, he marched against the Arabs and the tribes in the Sinaitic Peninsula. In both raids he was very successful, and Egypt was shut off from one of her great recruiting grounds. In 670 all was in readiness, and all things were favourable for the great attempt, and Egypt was successfully invaded. Its king at this time was Tirhakah (2 Kings xix. 9) the third of the Ethiopian dynasty which had mastered Egypt. With him battles were fought in rapid succession on the 3rd, the 16th and the 18th of the month Tammuz (July). On the 22nd of the same month Memphis (Nī, O.T. No, Jer. xlv. 25 ; Ezek. xxx. 14 ; Nah. iii. 8) was taken and plundered. After this Tirhakah fled to his own land, and all Egypt submitted. Native viceroys were appointed over the various nomes, but Assyrian officers held the actual control.

**51. BARBARIAN INROADS.**—The Empire of Assyria had now attained to its highest glory, and it is in truth a proud title which Esarhaddon can inscribe on his palace walls, “The great king, the mighty king, king of the kings of Egypt and Ethiopia.” Seldom, too, had there been such peace within the Empire’s bounds. But it was not to endure. Threatening clouds arose from a new and strange quarter. Asiatic Europeans now appeared and became a great menace to the stability of the Assyrian power. Hordes of Kimmerians spread over Cappadocia. By royal proclamation a hundred days were set apart in

Nineveh as a period of special prayer and sacrifice for the defeat and expulsion of these savages. The gods heard and granted the boon, the hordes were scattered, but the hold of Assyria upon the north was for ever loosened. The beginning of the end had come.

52. **DEATH OF ESARHADDON.**—Though so busy with his campaigns, Esarhaddon had still time for public works. He built the large “south-west palace” of Nineveh, which was, he says, a storehouse of all things. He also commenced the building of a great palace in Kalach, but did not live to see it completed. This king was a most energetic and victorious general, and in personal character is to us the most pleasing of all the kings of Assyria. His death took place while on a campaign against Egypt, and may have been from the plague, caught where Sennacherib’s army was destroyed. Before setting forth on this expedition the careful king had set his house in order, appointing his son Asshurbanipal king of Assyria, and another son, Shamash-shum-ukin, king of Babylon, but under the suzerainty of Nineveh. This was part of his policy of conciliation, and had his sons been as wise as he, it would have done much to reconcile the Babylonians to Assyrian rule, but it proved an unwise arrangement.





## CHAPTER VIII.

## ASSHURBANIPAL.

53. ASSHURBANIPAL, 668-626.—To this king students of Assyriology and of history are greatly indebted, for he was an intelligent patron of literature and a zealous antiquarian. His scribes wrote down or copied out great numbers of the legends, myths, hymns and traditions of old Babylonia, so that his library is a perfect treasure-house of valuable works which would otherwise have been completely lost.

Asshurbanipal is the Sardanapalus of the Greek legends, and he is also "the great and noble Osnapper," to whom the Samaritans refer in their letter to Artaxerxes (Ezra iv. 10). He does not appear to have been so fond of fighting, or of leading his army in person, as most of his predecessors, and some have accused him of being effeminate. The pictures exhibit him, however, as a mighty hunter; but it is quite possible that the court artists greatly exaggerated. His father left him many well-trained and efficient officers, which is probably the reason why the first half of his reign was so prosperous.

54. CAMPAIGN AGAINST EGYPT.—Disaffected subject states always looked forward to the death of a suzerain with expectation, for there was then an opportunity for revolt in the confusion which so often attended the establishment of his successor. Esarhaddon's death was the signal for revolt in Egypt, and Asshurbanipal's first campaign was



Dying Lioness. (Assurbanipal's Palace.)



against Tirhakah, who had managed to overthrow the Assyrian garrisons as far north as Memphis. When the two forces met victory rested with the invaders. Tirhakah fled to the south, and the surrounding country submitted. In forty days the Assyrian army reached Thebes, the capital, which voluntarily opened its gates. As soon as the main army had left Egypt, and returned to Nineveh, Necho, one of the nomarchs or kinglets in Egypt, and two other princes, immediately began intriguing with Tirhakah. Incriminating documents were discovered on their messengers by the vigilant Assyrian officers, and the whole plot was discovered. The three princes, bound hand and foot, were sent as captives to Nineveh, and their cities were given up to the soldiers to loot. For some reason Necho found favour with Assurbanipal, who granted him full pardon. He was clad in royal attire, with a gold chain on his neck, a gold ring on his finger, and a dagger bearing Assurbanipal's name upon its hilt in his girdle, and was sent back to his old province as vassal king of Sais. Soon after this the brave Tirhakah died, but his nephew Urdamane took up his cause. This prince gathered an army around him, captured Thebes, and with it as a base proceeded northwards, driving out the Assyrian garrisons. He had soon to retreat before the Assyrian, and made a final stand at Kipkip, within his own borders, where he suffered defeat. This battle brought to an end Ethiopian rule in Egypt. Thebes was besieged, taken, and thoroughly sacked. "With full hands" the Assyrian returned home, but the

end of his dominion on the Nile was not far off. Necho remained a faithful vassal to the king, who had treated him so graciously, but at his death his son Psammetichus revolted successfully. In this war of independence he was assisted by other Egyptian princes, and by troops sent to his help by the famous Gyges of Lydia. Of the details of this struggle we know little ; but it is certain that by about 645, the mid-time of Asshurbanipal's reign, Assyrian sway in Egypt had come to an end for ever.

**55. TYRE AND ELAM.**—Like his predecessors, Asshurbanipal attempted to take the city of Tyre, but was unsuccessful. The Tyrians, finding their commerce suffering by these wars, made overtures, and a peace with honour was concluded. Tyre undertook to pay an annual tribute, and the agreement was ratified by the Assyrian king marrying a daughter of Ba'al, the king of Tyre. There was now peace in the Westland, and all its kings, including Manasseh of Judah, and the twelve princes of Cyprus, brought gifts and did homage. But the eastern lands were not meanwhile abiding contentedly in vassalage. The Elamites entered into alliance with the Aramæans and declared war, but were defeated. Te-umman, a usurper, "a demon," according to the Assyrians, became king of Elam, and proved himself a most troublesome enemy. He was finally defeated in a bloody battle fought under the walls of Susa, his capital. Te-umman was killed, and his head carried to Nineveh, where it was hung up in the king's garden as a trophy. Dire punishment was



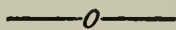
also meted out to the Aramæans for their share in the wars.

56. **REBELLION IN BABYLONIA.**—Although the empire was seemingly in its highest glory, yet it was full of the signs of dissolution. It was everywhere in commotion, as if there were a presentiment abroad that the time was at hand for deliverance from the ancient, cruel, and hated foe. Asshurbanipal puts all the blame for this condition of affairs upon his brother, the king of Babylon (§ 52). Grown weary of his subordinate position, and aggravated by the continual interference of Assyria, Shamash-shum-ukin decided to attempt to gain independence. He incited to rebellion with him Elam, the Guti (§ 14), Palestine (2 Chron. xxxiii. 10-13), and the Sinaitic Peninsula. He himself "barred the gates of Sippar, Babylon, and Borsippa, and the brotherly bond he annulled." The good generalship of the Assyrian commanders, aided by internal dissensions and revolutions in Elam, rendered this attempt unsuccessful. The several allies were defeated, and the cities of Babylonia were besieged. These defended themselves bravely, and held out desperately, but all in vain; they had to surrender, for "they were caught in the net of the great gods which no man can escape." Full justice, according to the standard of the victors, was administered, but fortunately the cities themselves were not destroyed. The king of Babylon died by self-immolation in his burning palace, rather than fall into his brother's hands. Asshurbanipal himself in 648 assumed the crown of Babylonia.

57. **WAR WITH ELAM.**—Asshurbanipal now demanded that a Chaldæan, a grandson of Mero-dach-baladan (§ 45), held in high honour at the court of Elam, be delivered up to him. As was expected, this demand was not acceded to, and war was at once declared against Elam. For sixty double leagues the Assyrians marched into the land, devastating as they went. As they returned, Susa, the capital, was taken and thoroughly looted. “The treasure house of the kings on which the hand of an enemy had never before been laid,” was broken open, and the silver, gold, and precious stones, the fruit of many forays into Babylonia, were carried off. The bones of the former kings and the images of the gods were also taken to Nineveh. The whole country was made a waste for gazelles and wild asses, “and the human voice, the tread of cattle and sheep, and the sound of joyful music I barred from the land.” The Chaldæan rather than be delivered over to the tender mercies of the Assyrians, his cruel hereditary enemies, acted as did the first king of Israel. “His life was worthless in his eyes, and to his armour-bearer he said: ‘Hew me down with the weapon’; and he and his armour-bearer stabbed one another with their daggers.” Asshurbanipal’s hate pursued his enemy even beyond death, for he mutilated the body that he might go dismembered to Sheol. “I permitted not his body to be buried, more dead than before I made him, I cut off his head.”

58. **CAMPAIGN IN ARABIA.**—The seventh campaign of Asshurbanipal’s reign was against

the Arabs, who were giving assistance to the Egyptians, and other rebellious peoples. To reach them, the inscriptions claim that the Assyrian army had to march through great dangers and weary lands, "wherein no bird of heaven flies." Great loss was inflicted on the Arabs, and their kings and leading men were sent to Nineveh, where they were shut up in cages and made to watch as dogs at the South Gate. One of the results of this campaign was a plentiful supply of camels, which because of the great herds brought as booty to Nineveh could be bought for a shekel or a shekel and a half.



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE FALL OF ASSYRIA.

59. **MEDIAN INVASION.**—Beyond about 644 B.C. there are no connected cuneiform inscriptions. The Ptolemaic Canon gives the date of Assurbanipal's death, but for the latter part of his long reign, and for the time between the close of his reign and the final catastrophe, but very little is known. The "great king" must have lived long enough to see the empire in confusion and slipping out of his grasp. Previously to this time the struggle for world power had been confined mainly to Semitic peoples, but we come now to the preparation for modern history—the awakening of the Aryans, before whom the ancient Semitic empire faded away. The first great blow Assyria received was from the Medes, under Phraortes. The

Medes were defeated, and Phraortes killed, but Assyria must have been exhausted by the struggle, for the victory was not followed up. Two years later the Medes, under Cyaxares, son of Phraortes, made another attempt at the life of Assyria ; this time so successfully that Nineveh itself was laid siege to. But Nineveh's day had not yet come, and, although unable to help itself, help came to it, and the Medes had to raise the siege, and hurry home to defend their own territory.

60. **THE SCYTHIANS.**—The danger that threatened the land of the Medes, and caused the abandonment of the siege of Nineveh, was the invasion of the Scythians. These barbarian hordes overran many lands, and still further weakened the hold of Assyria upon the nations. "From east and north-east there suddenly burst into hither Asia, like a plague of locusts, wild, war-like multitudes. Herodotus and Hippocrates describe them as a fierce, untamable folk of stout build, protruding stomachs, loose joints, and scanty hair. The men were almost always on horseback, the women and children lived in tent-like waggons drawn by oxen. Their clothing consisted of animal skins, their food was mares' milk and cheese, with sometimes boiled beef or horseflesh. Their conduct in war was extremely barbarous. The Scythian drank the blood of his slain enemy, cut off his head, and hung his scalp as an ornament on his bridle-rein. The skin of his right arm and hand he made into a quiver-cover, and the upper part of his skull into a drinking vessel. Besides the bow with which every Scythian was wonderfully expert, he carried



a short spear, and a short sword or battle-axe. At the head of all the tribes stood one tribe, the Royal Scythian, corresponding to the Golden Horde of the Mongols" (Delitzsch). This is doubtless a fancy picture which these classical writers give, and the description has certainly lost nothing in the telling. The Scythians were formerly thought to be of Tartar stock, but it is now admitted that they belonged to the Indo-European family and were connected with the Kimmerians<sup>1</sup> (§ 51). These barbarians ravaged Media, Assyria, Armenia, Syria, and Palestine, up to the entrance of Egypt, making the land wherever they went a wilderness. The exact date of this invasion is not certain, but it was probably in the latter years of Asshurbanipal's life. Many find reference to this invasion in Jer. iv.-vi.

**61. FALL OF NINEVEH.**—All we know of the successor of Asshurbanipal is that he rebuilt the temple of Nebo at Kalach. He was succeeded by his son Sin-shar-ishkun, in whose reign Assyria met its doom. Media soon recovered from the effects of the Scythian invasion, and renewed its hopes of conquering Assyria. Babylon, then ruled by Nabopolassar, a Chaldæan, was invited to assist in this adventure, and an alliance was entered into, and was strengthened by a marriage between members of the royal houses. War was then at

<sup>1</sup> It may be of interest to Scottish readers to know that the Scottish nobles in the time of Bruce in their manifesto to the Pope claim that the Scots are descended from the Scythians. (Story, "The Apostolic Ministry in the Scottish Church," Appendix—Aberbrothwick Manifesto.)

once declared against Assyria, and doubtless many of the neighbouring peoples joined with Elam and Babylon, eager to be in at the death of their common enemy. The exact date of the fall of Nineveh is not certain. It was still standing in 608 when Necho of Egypt made his famous campaign against Assyria (2 Kings xxiii. 29), and in 604 when the battle of Carchemish was fought, "Nineveh was no more, and the heirs had disposed of the effects." The year 607 B.C. is now generally held to be the date of the disappearance of Assyria from the stage of history. What Nineveh had so often rendered unto others was now rendered unto her in seven fold measure. The city was sacked and burned, then buried under earth and debris, so that its very memory might perish completely. All the surrounding fortresses were treated in like manner. So completely was this work of destruction accomplished, that a few generations later the exact site of Nineveh, at one time proud mistress of the world, was forgotten and could not be pointed out.

62. Truly God moves in a mysterious way in the carrying out of His wondrous plan for the world. Through this, her utter ruin and death, Nineveh found immortality, and the grave which should consign her to perpetual oblivion, but preserved her memory through the dark ages. Now in the fulness of times the grave has given up its dead, and Nineveh lives again in history with a fulness of life granted to no other nation of early ages.

## CHAPTER X.

## NEW BABYLONIA.

63. **SOURCES OF HISTORY.**—Babylonia attained to independence in 625 B.C., and with the fall of Nineveh (607) it became heir of the Westland, the countries in the east and north becoming the portion of the Medes. This third empire was but of brief duration, lasting less than a century, when a younger and more virile nation assumed the leadership. The history of this period has to be gathered mainly from outside sources. There are long cuneiform inscriptions remaining, but their contents deal more with religious matters than with political history. This is accounted for by the greater influence of the priesthood in Babylonia, and the ruins from this time, so far excavated, are mostly those of temples. It may be that historical inscriptions will yet be found, from which an adequate and exact history of the times may be compiled.

64. **NABOPOLASSAR** (625-604) was the founder of the new Babylonia, but of the events of his reign very little is known. He was not permitted to take undisputed possession of the Westland, for in 608 Necho II. of Egypt invaded the country. He defeated and killed Josiah of Judah (2 Kings xxiii. 29 f.), and marched victorious as far as the Euphrates, and for three years the whole land was under the sway of Egypt. Nabopolassar, already laid aside by his final illness, in 604 sent his son

Nebuchadrezzar to recover Syria. This young leader met the Egyptians at Carchemish, and after a stubbornly contested battle defeated them (Jer. xvi. 2). Nebuchadrezzar then proceeded to bring the whole Westland into subjection, and had just completed this work when information of his father's death reached him. Fearing lest some attempt to seize supreme power might be made in his absence so far from the capital, he left the army in command of a trusty officer, and with a small corps of cavalry hastened across to Babylon.

65. **BABYLON AND JUDAH.**—Nebuchadrezzar (Nabu-kudur-uṣur, "Nebo protect the crown," 604-561), on his arrival found that his fears had been groundless. At his father's death, the chief priests had immediately, in the name of the son, taken charge of affairs. On his arrival the authority was at once handed over to him. After a few years of comparative peace, he had to proceed to Syria, which was in a state of unrest, stirred up thereto by agitators from Tyre and Egypt. Jehoiakim (2 Kings xxiii. 36—xxiv. 7) son of Josiah had been made king by Necho (§ 64), but he became a vassal to Nebuchadrezzar with the rest of the Westland, when Necho was driven out (2 Kings xxiv. 7). After a while he rebelled, and his capital was besieged. At his death he was succeeded by his eighteen-year-old son Jehoiachin (2 Kings xxiv. 8-17). This young king refused to pay tribute to Assyria, with the result that after a reign of three months he, his mother, servants, and officers were carried prisoners to Babylon, ten thou-



sand of the best people of Jerusalem, princes, magistrates, soldiers, and artisans were deported, and all the treasure of temple and palace confiscated. Zedekiah (Mattaniah), uncle of Jehoiachin, was made vassal king by Nebuchadrezzar (2 Kings xxiv. 17). After remaining faithful to his chief for eight years, Zedekiah rebelled at the instigation of the youthful Hophra, the new king of Egypt. The army of Babylonia soon appeared in the land, and invested Jerusalem. Hophra tried to come to the assistance of his ally, but was driven back by the besieging forces. For a year and a half, the capital of Judah made a brave resistance, but at last starvation forced it to surrender. Zedekiah was taken to Riblah, where Nebuchadrezzar then was. His children were killed before his sight, and his eyes were then put out. The unhappy monarch spent the remainder of his life a captive in Babylonia. The besieging army burned Jerusalem and its temple, pulled down its walls, and carried off the people, except the poorest, over whom Gedaliah was made governor. This Gedaliah was a good man, and would have proved himself a wise ruler, but he was assassinated by a renegade Hebrew, Ishmael, after which the people fled to Egypt, taking the prophet Jeremiah with them. With this act, and a third deportation, the kingdom of Judah came to a perpetual end (2 Kings xxv. ; Jer. lii.).

66. **TYRE AND EGYPT.**—Tyre baffled Nebuchadrezzar as it had baffled the Assyrian kings. For thirteen years (585-572) he blockaded the city,

but it was practically impregnable from the land, and the Babylonians had no power to prevent the entry of supplies by water. The siege was concluded by a treaty. More successful were his campaigns against Egypt. We have not yet his own accounts of these, but an Egyptian inscription relates that he forced his way through the country up as far as Syene (modern Aswan) on the borders of Ethiopia. The Babylonian hold upon Egypt at this time cannot have been very firm or permanent. The relations of Nebuchadrezzar with Media were very friendly all through his reign. This was natural from the close alliance existing before the fall of Nineveh, an alliance which had been confirmed by his marriage with a daughter of the Median King.

**67. BABYLON THE GREAT.**—In the time of the new Babylonian empire the city of Babylon attained to a greatness unequalled by any oriental city of ancient or modern times. It was during this period of its greatest glory that the captives from Judah spent their exile in the land, many of them doubtless in the capital or near to it, and so impressed were they by its magnificence and its wide-reaching commerce that the memory of these lived into New Testament times (cp. Rev. xviii.). "To get a more adequate conception of Babylon as the Hebrew exiles saw it, we must think of the manifold occupations and employments carried on in the city. We must imagine the warehouses filled with the products of Europe, Asia, and Africa. We must picture to ourselves the manufactories large and small, each branch of industry being as-

signed to its own quarter or quarters of the city. We must visit in fancy the shops where 'goodly Babylonish garments' and rich carpetings were offered for sale, where the finest work of the potter was displayed, where precious unguents and perfumes were to be had, where countless articles of bronze, of silver, of gold, and of all sorts of precious stones, were enticingly set forth. We must observe what a number and variety of clay cylinders and tablets were made and sold, and realize that we have before us the panorama of an oriental Athens and Rome in one—a place of knowledge and inquiry; of universal reading and writing; of immense monetary and property interests; of system, law, and complex administration. We must have before our mind's eye the men of the city, with their long linen tunics reaching to the feet, their woollen mantles, and the short white cape over all; their thick-soled sandals, their long hair bound up into fillets, and their delicate perfumes; every one of them with a staff in his hand carved with an apple, a rose, a lily, an eagle, or some other fanciful device. Finally, to understand what manner of men the Babylonians were, we must resort to their temples, and see how much of their life was attached to and moulded by the worship of their gods" (MacCurdy, "History, Prophecy, and the Monuments," iii. p. 159). But this Babylon who thus sat "as a queen" was largely the work of the greatest of her monarchs. As a builder Nebuchadrezzar has had few peers. He built the two great walls of Babylon, with a moat between them. The outer wall was

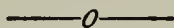
about a hundred feet in height, and so broad was it, that two chariots could be driven alongside each other upon its top. Beyond the walls, in what seemed the more vulnerable points, he erected defences, so that the great city of Babylon was, as far as man could make it, an impregnable fortress. He rebuilt, enlarged, and adorned the two great temples in Babel and Borsippa, dedicated respectively to Merodach and Nebo. On them he lavished gold, silver, bronze, iron, precious stones, ivory, and cedar in enormous quantities. Many other temples were rebuilt or enlarged, while for himself he erected a huge palace. This palace, Berossus says, was completed in fifteen days from the commencement of its foundation, a statement which is confirmed by an inscription of Nebuchadrezzar himself. He dug or deepened many canals, and by these and other public works he benefited and enriched his land. The ancients regarded as his greatest work the famous "Hanging Garden." This was a large, artificial, terraced hill, planted with trees and flowers, many of them being brought from foreign lands for its adornment. Upon it were fountains, brooks, and ponds, supplied with water raised by machinery from the Euphrates. It is said he made this out of regard for his Median wife, Amytis, who had become wearied of the level plains and regular outline of Babylonia, and pined for the hills and wooded braes of her youthful Highland home. As Nebuchadrezzar looked over Babel with its walls and palaces, its temples and towers, its bridges and houses, and contrasted it



with what it was when he began to reign, he could truly say, "Is not this great Babylon which I have builded, by the might of my power, and for the glory of my majesty" (Dan. iv. 30). This in his mouth would be no vain or empty boast. Nebuchadrezzar appears to us as the real founder of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, as a fearless warrior, a tireless builder, and as one who wisely cared for his people. He was one of the greatest kings who had ever ruled in Western Asia, and he passed away full of years and honours, leaving behind him an empire, which to outward appearance, might last for ages.

68. NEBUCHADREZZAR'S MADNESS.—The Book of Daniel contains a tradition about this king that he was for a time mad, when he was among the beasts of the field and like them. The inscriptions contain no allusion to this. Abydenus gives another tradition which has some resemblances to the Bible story. He says that after Nebuchadrezzar had become stronger than Hercules he ascended the royal fortress, and, inspired by a god, prophesied, saying: "I, Nebuchadrezzar, declare unto you the coming of the unpreventable misfortune, Perses, the Persian mule, cometh who will have your own ruler Nabonid, the son of the Median woman, for ally, but who will bring slavery. Oh, may he, before the citizens go to destruction, be hunted into a desert place where neither city is, nor man ever treads, but where wild beasts feed, and wild birds fly, while he alone in caves, and clefts of the rocks wanders." Having thus prophesied, he suddenly disappeared.

69. **NEBUCHADREZZAR'S SUCCESSORS.**—After a reign of forty-three years Nebuchadrezzar died, and was succeeded by his son Amēl-Marduk (Evil-Merodach, 2 Kings xxv. 27 ff.), 561-559. Of this king we possess no inscriptions, though some contracts dated from his reign have been found. Berossus says he ruled very unjustly, but all the Bible records of him is his kindly treatment of Jehoiachin, who had been pining for thirty years in prison. He was slain in a revolt headed by his brother-in-law Nergal-shar-uṣur (Neriglissar) who succeeded him. This king (559-555) is probably the Nergalsharezer of Jer. xxxix. 3, 13. He was succeeded by his son Labasi-Marduk, a mere boy, who after a reign of nine months, was put to death by a conspiracy of nobles. One of the most prominent of the conspirators was a noble named Nabonidos (Nabu-na'id, "Nebo is exalted"), who was chosen king, and was the last native ruler of Babylonia.



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE FALL OF BABYLON.

70. **NABONIDOS (555-538)** was not of the blood royal, but seems to have married a daughter of Nebuchadrezzar to establish his claim to the throne. He was an energetic and zealous explorer and restorer of ruined temples, always seeking out corner-stones and the inscriptions

under them. It is from him that the date of Sargon I. is definitely known (§ 6). He did not confine his labours to Babylon, but paid as much attention to temples outside of the capital as to those within its walls. In the latter years of his reign he removed the gods of the various cities and brought them all to Babylon, for what reason is not clear. Some think it was an attempt to centralize the religion in the capital, but this does not seem a good explanation. At all events, he was soon at variance with the priesthood, always a powerful class in the land, and this state of affairs was of great assistance to Cyrus when he invaded the country. The king removed his court for a time from Babylon, and stopped the performance of important religious services, which would intensify the dislike of the priests and people of Babylon, and make them eager for a change of government. The feeling of the outside cities towards Nabonidos does not seem to have been any more friendly. Hence perhaps not only the pious Jewish exiles, who looked forward with great expectation to the coming of Cyrus, the anointed of Jehovah (Isa. xlv.), but many of the Babylonians themselves, may have been favourable to the Persian.

71. **CYRUS.**—One of the most famous names in the records of the race is that of Cyrus, the Persian. This king was of supreme importance in the making of history, and naturally around his name gathered legends and myths, until it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the true from the false. He was not a foundling nurtured by

poor people, nor was he of humble origin, as traditions say, but he was of royal parentage, at least three of his ancestors being kings. Anshan, his hereditary kingdom, was a small and unimportant province in Elam, yet Cyrus was not an Elamite, as some hold, but a Persian, the district of Anshan having come under the dominion of the Achæmenides. In one inscription Nabonidos styles him a "petty vassal of Astyages," and tells that he had only a small army. This Astyages, called by Nabonidos a Scythian, was probably an alien who was ruling over the Medes. Although the Median Empire was now at its highest power, Cyrus revolted, doubtless relying on dissatisfaction among the Medes themselves. When the armies met, the forces of Astyages revolted against him, and delivered him over to Cyrus, who then made himself king in Ecbatana, the capital. This is told by both Nabonidos and Herodotus. From this time the world-empire was Medo-Persian. Its ruling power was Persian, while its population was overwhelmingly Median, but the good statesmanship and absolute fairness of Cyrus soon made it a unit. The rise of Cyrus was anxiously watched by Babylonia, Egypt, and Lydia, and an alliance, offensive and defensive, was entered into by the kings of these countries. Cræsus of Lydia foolishly resolved to adventure war alone, and before his allies could give any help he was defeated, and Lydia conquered. Sardis, its capital, then became the permanent centre of Persian power in the west. The various Greek states and settlements were forced to submit themselves.



Babylonia was also won over to the rule of the king of Anshan, and the whole known world came under the sway of Cyrus. In personal character, Cyrus seems to have been kindly as well as wise, and it is always reported of him that he treated conquered princes with kindness. His generosity towards subject and exiled peoples was also such as to reconcile or attach them to his rule. It has been thought that he was a Zoroastrian in religion because of his kindness to the Jews, but his treatment of them was not from sympathy with their religion ; it was his settled policy not only to permit but to encourage all his vassal peoples to practise their own religious rites.

**72. THE FALL OF BABYLON.** The story of the capture of the city of Babylon by Cyrus as told by the classical writers is as follows : In 539, information came to the King of Babylon that Cyrus had set out from Ecbatana which was at that time his capital. A delay occurred in crossing the river Diyala. One of the sacred white horses was drowned, and Cyrus, enraged, swore to make the stream such that a woman could wade it, and not get her knees damp. To accomplish this, the whole summer was spent in digging canals. Suddenly in the following spring Cyrus appeared before Babylon. Belshazzar was left in command of the city, and Nabonidos went out to meet Cyrus ; but was defeated in the battle which followed. Siege was then laid to Babylon, but the city was so strong that the work seemed hopeless. Cyrus, however, set his army to dig canals to carry away the waters of the Euphrates. When all was ready

the last dam was removed, and the waters of the Euphrates fell so low that Persian soldiers passed under the walls of the city along the river bed. The sentries were not watchful, and unmolested the Persians reached the great gates which they opened and Babylon was soon taken. Nabonidos was treated with great kindness by Cyrus, and appointed governor of Karamania.

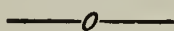
**73. SUBMISSION OF BABYLON.**—This tradition differs very materially from the ascertained facts of the case. Nabonidos does not seem to have been either a brave or a resourceful soldier, but his character will not be understood until the relations existing between him and the priests, and the causes of these have been discovered. From his seventh until his eleventh year, the king was not in Babylon but in a suburb called Tema, and the “son of the king, the nobles and the army were in, Akkad.” This son to whom the king refers, and to whom he seems to have given up the command was, as a prayer-tablet shows, Bel-shar-uşur, the Belshazzar of Daniel, and a contract tablet of this date records the price at “which the secretary of Belshazzar, son of the king,” rents a house for three years. In the seventeenth year of Nabonidos (538) a battle was fought with the Persians, and the Babylonians were defeated. On the 14th of the month Tammuz Sippar opened its gates to Cyrus, and on the 16th, two days later, Gubaru, the governor of Gutium, led the Persian army to Babylon, which without any opposition received them. This was in July, but it was not until October that Cyrus himself entered Babylon. He was received with

great rejoicings and all in authority kissed his feet. Cyrus claimed that he was called by Merodach to be king of Babylon, in place of Nabonidos who was an impious man, and that he restored to their shrines the gods which that king had wickedly removed.

**74. INSCRIPTION OF CYRUS.** — Cyrus recorded the capture of Babylon in a long cylinder inscription, written doubtless at his orders by Babylonian scribes. "Merodach sought out a righteous prince after his own heart whom he might take by the hand ; Cyrus, King of Anshan, he called by his name, for empire over the whole world he proclaimed his title (*cf.* Isa. xlv. 1-3). To the city of Babylon he commanded him to go, he made him take the road to Babylon ; like a friend and helper he went by his side, without contest and battle he made him enter into Babylon his city ; Babylon he spared from tribulation. Nabonidos the king that did not fear him, he delivered into his hand. All the people of Babylon, princes and governors, kissed his feet, they rejoiced in his kingdom, bright was their countenance." Other passages in the cylinder refer to the zeal displayed by Cyrus for the Babylonian gods, and show how ready he was to be "all things to all men" in order to win their favour and make them contented with his rule.

**75. END OF THE SEMITIC EMPIRE.**—The surrender of the ancient city of Babylon to the Persian Cyrus, marks the close of the first great stage in the history of the world—the Semitic period. The Semitic genius had done its work as leader in

the development of civilization, and its part in this was no mean one. Now it surrendered the leadership to other hands. Babylonia never again regained independence, but since the time of Cyrus has always been a province subject to whatever power has held authority in Western Asia. Under succeeding Persian kings several attempts were made to drive out the foreigners, and reëstablish a native rule, but these movements were confined to the patriotic parties in the state, the great mass of the people taking no part in them. They were all unsuccessful, and the leaders beheaded or crucified. After the fall of Jerusalem the city of Babylon became an important Jewish centre.



## CHAPTER XII.

### GENESIS ACCORDING TO THE MONUMENTS.

76. CREATION. — That the first chapters of Genesis, and many of the stories of ancient Babylonia, come from a common source cannot now be doubted ; the resemblance between them is too close to be accidental. The story of the creation of the world is found on a series of tablets named from the first words, the “When Above” tablets. Of these only a few fragments have as yet been discovered, and thus the acts of creation cannot be followed step by step in natural sequence as in Genesis, though the plan seems to have been in



the main the same. The story opens with order being brought from chaos.

When above, the heaven was not named,  
Below, the earth bore no name,  
The Ocean (Apsu) the first was their generator.  
The raging Deep (Tiamat), the mother of their whole.  
Their waters were collected together to one place.

Tiamat (Tehōm, Gen. i. 2) is a very old Semitic word, and is full of mythical significance. In the beginning before the heavens and the earth came into being there was simply chaos, a great fluid mass in which generative principles were at work. No gods were as yet, but these arose in course of time, Anu, Bel, and Ea, the great triad of heaven, earth, and ocean being the crown. From this point there is a gap until we reach the fifth tablet.

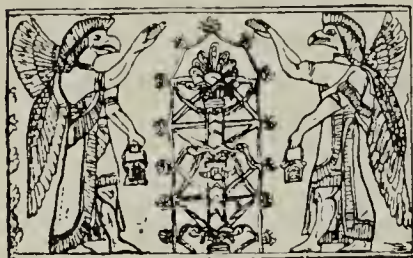
77. This fifth tablet tells of the creation of the heavenly bodies, the fourth day in the Hebrew narrative :

He (Anu) gloriously set up the abodes of the great gods,  
The stars he caused as *lumasi* to come forth,  
He ordained the years and marked the divisions.  
The twelve months he divided among three stars ;  
From the day the year issues forth unto its close.

The earth was fastened securely, the waters beneath were barred in their place, and in east and west great gates were placed for the coming out and going in of the sun. The greatest creation of all was the moon, to whom was handed over the night, and who was appointed to mark off the days. Another tablet, of which only the beginning remains, tells of the creation of living beings, beasts of the field and creeping things.

78. TIAMAT.—Traditions, which are generally oral, have always many variations. This was the case in Babylonia, and it is not always easy to get the links necessary to make a complete story. Tiamat is an awful monster, and from her issue other monsters which people chaos. She makes these “sharp of tooth, merciless in attack, and with poison instead of blood she fills their veins.” When the gods come into existence she is enraged against them, for if they are to be, her reign is at an end. The gods are afraid of her, and try to conciliate her, but in vain. One after another in terror declines the conflict, until finally Merodach rises up and declares his willingness to enter the arena against her. After a fierce struggle, which is graphically described, the god is victorious: “he pierced her entrails, he tore through her heart, and ended her life, he threw down her carcase and trampled upon her.” He then routed her associates and took the “tablets of fate” from Kingu their leader. “He cuts the carcase of Tiamat as one does a flattened fish into two halves,” and with one of the halves he made the firmament. Apsu was then put under control, and all was ready for the creation of life. This version is evidently a mythical form of the story of the bringing of order out of chaos. It also represents the struggle between light and darkness, or between good and evil, and was one of the most popular of all the folk tales of the east. Hints of it occur quite frequently in the Old Testament. It has been long known to ourselves under the form of St George and the Dragon, having been

brought from the east by the crusaders who followed the orthodox custom and made their own hero George the hero of the story. Merodach



Sacred Tree.

is not likely the original hero, but was made one by the Babylonians.

79. **THE FALL OF MAN AND THE TREE OF LIFE.**—In the “When Above” tablets

the story of man’s creation is lacking, though had we the series complete it would no doubt be found. The Fall may also have had a place in the narrative, and some have found a reference to it in one of the fragments ; but the interpretation is doubtful. That there was a tradition of the Fall seems certain from the representation upon an old cylinder of two figures, a man and a woman sitting at a fruit-tree, one on each side, while behind the woman a serpent is standing. The sacred tree is one of the most common objects in Babylonian art, entering into most of their decorations. It is generally of conventional form, and often has guardian or priestly figures beside it.

It is the date palm, the most valuable of all trees



Supposed memorial of the Fall.  
Cylinder in British Museum.

to the peoples of the East. So sacred had it become to the Babylonians, that long after they had settled communities and other fruits it retained its sanctity. The Tree of Life is

referred to in the Gilgamesh Epic, of which we shall speak later. And the idea of immortality in food is seen in the myth of Adapu. Adapu, a fisherman, a son of Ea, yet a mortal, was by the favour of his father introduced into the abode of the gods. The jealous gods are angry, but the sacrilege can only be removed by raising Adapu to immortality. The bread of life and the waters of life are placed before him, but Ea whispered to him they would bring death not life. Adapu refused to eat, and had to return a mortal as he came. We seem to find here the same problem as in Genesis; why may not man live for ever? It is answered in the same way by food of life. Man is prevented from eating of this food however, in the one case by his own sin, in the other by the treachery of a god.<sup>1</sup> Adapu is called in one passage, "seed of mankind."

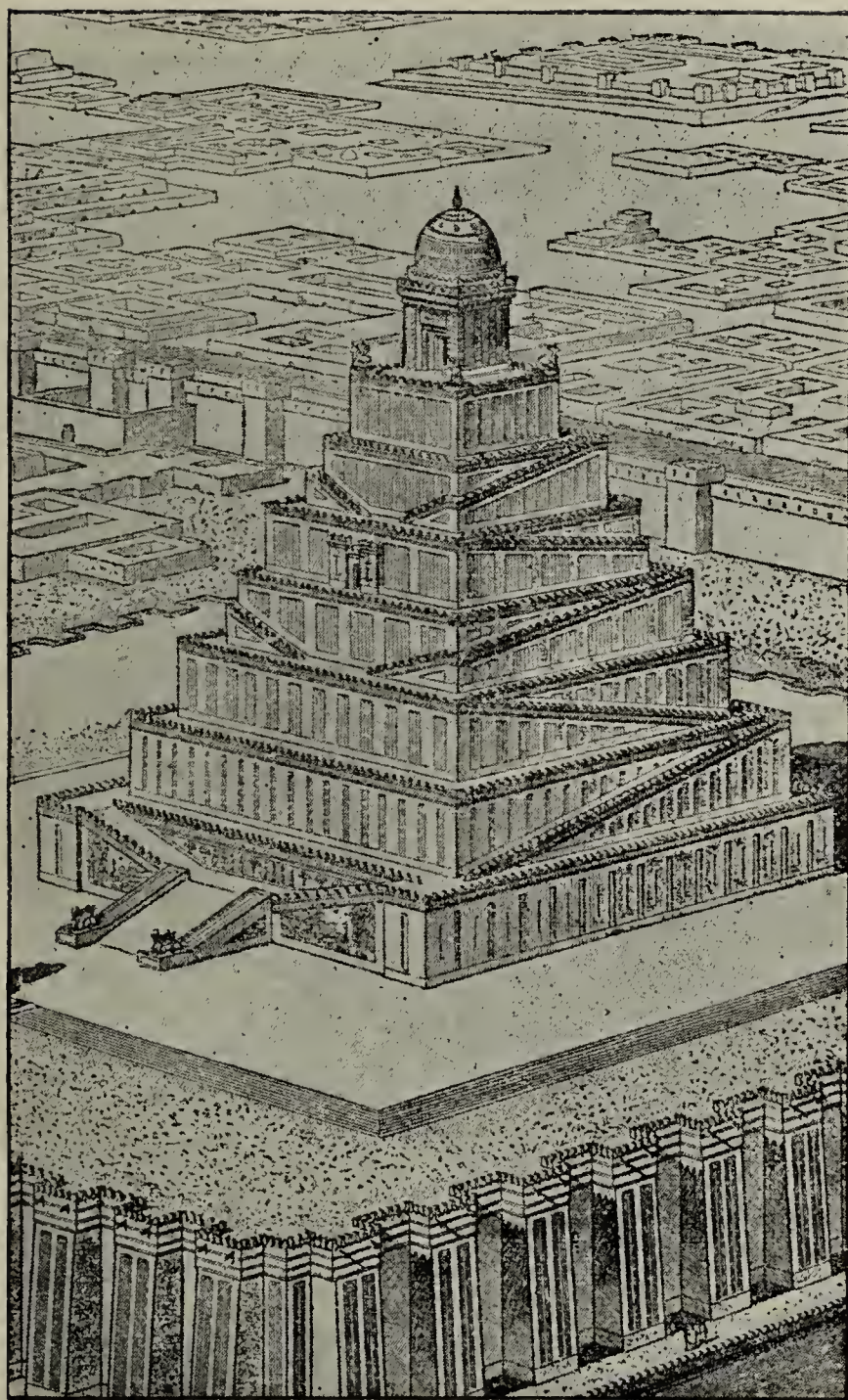
80. **THE SABBATH.**—The week of seven days is a very ancient Babylonian institution, unknown to the Egyptians or Greeks, who had a week of ten days, or to the Romans, who had a week of eight days. The seventh day is often mentioned upon the monuments. It is a day of resting to Merodach and Zarpanit, it is a holy day, a Sabbath. On it "the shepherd of mighty nations (the king) must not eat flesh cooked in the coals, or any food that has touched the fire; his clothes

<sup>1</sup> This story of Adapu has come to us in a romantic manner. The beginning was brought from Nineveh, from the ruins of Assurbanipal's library, and dates thus from the seventh century B.C. The middle portion was found at Tel-el-amarna (§ 17), where it was studied some seven hundred years before the time of Assurbanipal.



he must not change ; his glistening robes he must not put on ; he must not offer sacrifices ; he must not ride in his chariot ; he must not issue royal decrees. In a secret place a seer must not give an oracle ; a physician upon a sick man must not lay his hand." The day is called "Shabattu," rest, and is designated "a day for the propitiation of the hearts of the gods" ; but it is also called an evil, that is, an unlucky day. The seventh, fourteenth, nineteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth days of the month were Sabbath days ; why the nineteenth should be included is not known. The number seven, the number of completeness, was a sacred number, and occurs continually.

81. TOWER OF BABEL.—So far there has been no trace of any tradition resembling the story of the confusion of tongues found in Babylonian inscriptions. But the tower described in Gen. xi. 3, 4, might very well refer to the tower (*ziggurat*, § 89) which was a part of every temple or shrine in Babylonia. At Borsippa the mound of this tower is the highest of all, and it is known there was in this city a very high tower, which was often rebuilt but never completed. This was the house of the seven spheres of heaven and earth, and is held by many to have been the original of the Bible story. It may, however, have been the *ziggurat* in Babylon itself that was in the writer's mind. Herodotus tells that the temple or tower in Babylon destroyed just before his time had eight terraces, and the top was the holy of holies, the dwelling-place of God (*cf.* Ezek. xliii. 12). The city of Babel was not only the capital of Babylonia but it was the gather-



"Ziggurat" restored. According to probabilities.  
(Perrot and Chipiez.)

ing place of the nations, and many languages could be heard in it.

82. FLOOD STORY.—The story of the Deluge is remarkable for its very close resemblance to the story as told in Genesis. It is the eleventh book of the Gilgamesh Epic, and is told to the hero of that epic by Pir-napishti, the Babylonian Noah, who has been given immortality. “I will reveal to thee the secret, and the decrees of the gods I will tell thee. The city Surippak, the city which thou knowest, on the Euphrates it lies ; the city was already ancient when the gods therein, the great gods, decided in their heart to make a deluge. The God the Lord of wisdom argued with them, their decision he made known to the forest ; calling : ‘Forest, forest, town, town, forest hear, and town give heed. Man of Surippak, construct a house (ark), build a ship, abandon thy possessions, save thy life. Bring the seed of life into the ship. The ship which thou shalt build let her proportions be measured.’” Pir-napishti enquires what he shall tell the people when they come around and ask why he is building the ark, and is told to warn them of the anger of Bel, and the coming flood. The ship was built 10 gar long (140 cubits), 10 gar wide, in seven stories, with nine divisions in each story, and was thoroughly pitched outside and in. He then offered becoming sacrifices, and proceeded to load the ark. “With all I had I laded it, with all that I had of silver and gold I laded it, with every kind of seed I laded it. I brought on board all my family and my household, cattle of the field, and (wild) beasts, and the workmen all of them I



embarked. The god Shamash had given me a sign, 'When he who sends the rain storm, sends at eventime a fearful storm, enter into the ship, and close the door.'" This sign came, "he who sends the rain sent at eventime a fearful rain. I trembled at the approach of dawn for I feared to see the day. I entered the ark and closed my door. The guidance of the ship the great ark and its contents I gave unto Puzur-shadurabu the boatman. At break of day there arose from the horizon dark clouds, Ramman thundered therein, Nebo and Merodach went in front, the throne-bearers passed over mountain and vale, Urugal let loose tar-gul-le (some evil forces), Adar advanced, he made the rivers to overflow. The Annunaki lifted on high their torches, in their flare the earth trembled. Ramman's whirlwind reached to heaven, all light was changed to darkness." Confusion and devastation filled the earth. "Brother saw not his brother, nor could one man recognise another. In the heavens even the gods were in terror, and fled up to the heaven of Anu; the gods like dogs cowered behind the ramparts of the heavens. Then cried Ishtar full of wrath; the great goddess cried aloud, 'The people have been turned to clay even as I foretold before the gods, the evil I predicted. What I have created, where is it? Like young fishes they fill the waters.' The gods and spirits wept with her, the gods sat down with weeping. . . . Six days and nights the storm raged, hurricane and cyclone swept along. On the seventh day it moderated, the



storm which a battle like an army had fought, rested, the sea became quieter, the wind and rain-storm had an end. I looked over the sea. I raised my voice, but all men were turned to clay. I opened the air-hole, light fell on my face. Overcome I sat down, I wept, tears flowed down my cheeks. I looked up. 'The world is a wide sea.' After twelve . . . a strip of land appeared. To Mt. Nizir the ark drew near. Mt. Nizir held the ship, it let it not go. For six days the ark remained in this position. When the seventh day came I let forth a dove. The dove flew hither and thither, but there was no resting-place, so she came back. Then sent I forth a swallow, but because there was no resting-place she returned. Then sent I out a raven, the raven flew off, it saw the decrease of the waters; it fed, settling down, it came not back." Satisfied that the flood was over, Pir-napishti left the ark and prepared a sacrifice. "The gods inhaled the sweet savour, the gods gathered like flies around the sacrificer." Ishtar swore by her necklace that she would never forget these days. She exclaimed, "Let the gods come to the sacrifice, but Bel shall not come, because inconsiderately did he cause the deluge; and handed over my humanity to destruction." When Bel saw the ship he was enraged against the gods. "What soul has escaped? No one must escape the destruction." The other gods blamed Ea, and said to Bel that he must be guilty of saving the man. Ea denied that he had divulged the secrets of the gods, he had only sent a dream to Pir-napishti, by which he knew that a flood was

coming. Ea then took Bel to task for inconsiderately causing the flood. “‘ Upon the sinner lay his sin’s reward, upon the evil doer his evil deeds ; but be lenient. Root not out ; be long-suffering, destroy not everything. Instead of a deluge let lions come, and diminish mankind. Instead of a flood let leopards come, instead of a deluge let famine come, and smite the land. Let pestilence (Urugal) come and waste the land.’ Then came Bel to his senses, he entered the ark, took me by the hand, and raised me up. He raised up my wife and placed her by my side. He blessed us, saying, ‘Hitherto was Adrachasis (another name of Noah) mortal, but now shall he and his wife be like to the gods. He shall dwell by the mouth of the rivers.’ Then they took us and placed us by the mouth of the rivers.”

Such is the Flood story as contained in Babylonian tradition, and that the Bible story and it are one is self-evident. The story as told in Genesis cannot, however, have been taken from this version, the differences are too great, but both are from one original. That this story is older than the time of Chammurabi (§ 15) is seen from the very minor part played by Merodach, the god of Babylon (§ 83).

## CHAPTER XIII.

## RELIGION.

83. **THE PANTHEON.**—The gods are so many, and the confusion is such that it is impossible to write a systematic theology, or to say precisely what were the functions exercised by the different deities. As a clan or tribe was conquered by, or became allied with, a stronger tribe or city, the local or family god became a minor deity in the Pantheon, but no care was taken to define his place among the other gods. Hence so many gods and such confusion. The principal gods were the heavenly hosts, especially the sun and moon and five planets, which may be the origin of the sanctity of the number seven. Each city, while worshipping many, had one especial patron god, and naturally all great deeds were ascribed to him. Thus, as Babylon was the last and most enduring metropolis, its god Merodach (Marduk), before the time of Chammurabi a very minor deity, became one of the leading gods, and many great deeds which formerly were ascribed to some other deity were now credited to him. For one reason or another great confusion exists in their relations the one to the other as also in the scope of their rule. The same confusion is found, though not in such a marked degree, in the classical mythology which, in its systematic form, is in part an adaptation of the Babylonian under new names.

84. **THE GODS.**—In the place of honour were

the supreme triad, Anu, Bel and Ea, gods of heaven, earth and sea respectively. These were regarded with great awe and invoked on every very solemn occasion ; but they were not everyday gods, nor regarded with the kindly affection and friendliness of the people for the other deities. The great gods of daily life were the planets. Of these Shamash, Sîn and Ishtar (sun, moon and Venus), formed the chief triad. Shamash was perhaps the most universally and permanently popular god in both Babylonia and Assyria, yet his position was originally subsidiary to that of the moon. He is the god of day, the beneficent one, and also the "great judge" and searcher out. Many beautiful hymns, full of devotion to the sun, have been found. Sîn, the moon, is the maker of brightness—"lord of the crown. He is the strong and holy one, and in addressing him terms of endearment are few. Ur was closely identified with his worship, as was also Harra. In later times, as astronomy became more exact, the moon's worship became neglected, while in Assyria it never attained to much prominence. Ishtar, daughter of the moon, is really the only goddess in the Babylonian pantheon. Many others are named, but they are mere shadows of their lords, manufactured by the schoolmen in order to provide the gods with mothers. Ishtar was worshipped by all the northern Semites ; she is the Astarte of the Bible, the Aphrodite of the Greeks, and the Venus of the Romans. She was fierce and warlike, according to one view, but generally she was represented as the benign mother of mankind. She was the goddess of love, and



reproduction, and hence her worship was often attended by obscene rites.

85. **OTHER GODS.**—Merodach (Jupiter) was god of Babel, and is styled the “great lord.” He is the mediator between his father, the good god Ea, and mankind. Nebo (Nabu, Mercury) was the prophet and messenger of the gods. His name means “speaker,” and is the same as the Hebrew word for prophet. In Nebo was all the wisdom of the gods, and he was also patron of agriculture. His chief seat was in Borsippa, and on every New Year’s Day he paid an official visit to Merodach, his father, in Babylon, being carried in procession from Borsippa to Merodach’s temple. Adar, or Ninip (Saturn) and Nergal (Mars) were gods of war, the former the leader to victory, the latter the god of the devastation which accompanies war. As would be expected, both were gods of hunting, their delight was in bloodshed. Ramman was the thunder and storm god; his curses were the most dreadful, for his instruments were lightning, hunger and death. Asshur, the patron god of Assyria, was not worshipped in the older land. Like his people he was a warlike deity, delighting in battle and carnage. His chief symbol was a standard.

86. **DEMONS.**—But the gods were not the only supernatural beings who held sway in the earth. The world was full of spirits, some of them being good, but most of them malign; every phenomenon in Nature had its spirit. Evil demons were lurking everywhere, watching and waiting for opportunities for mischief. All evil was their work, the pesti-

lences and diseases so rife in the land, insanity, hate, petty troubles, little accidents, all were the work of these insidious demons. One group was especially feared, and a vivid description is given of them in an incantation :

Seven are they, seven are they,  
In the depths of the abyss seven are they,  
Perched in the sky, seven are they.  
Male they are not, nor are they female,  
Whirlwinds of destruction are they.  
They have no wife, neither do they beget children,  
Compassion and mercy they know not,  
Prayer and supplication they will not hear,  
Wild horses bred on the mountains are they.  
Hostile to Ea are they, evil are they, evil are they,  
Seven are they, seven are they, and a second time they are  
seven.

When in danger from these spirits, to repeat the above was held to give sure protection.

87. **INCANTATIONS.**—No one was free from the malice of these demons. Even the gods were not exempt, for at least on one occasion, they attempted to storm heaven, and tried to snatch away the “tablets of fate,” the supreme possession of the gods. The only way to overcome or cure the evils caused by them was by incantation or exorcism, and of this science the priests were the recognised exponents. Medicine under these conditions could not flourish. In a case of sickness a priest was sent for, and he diagnosed the case, and declared what spirit it was which was causing the trouble. The proper incantation was then repeated, often with accompanying actions as knotting and unknotting coloured threads,

burning small images of the spirit, or peeling an onion. These actions were not symbolic, but were supposed to be in themselves effective in releasing the patient from the sickness or trouble which was upon him. If the first incantation did not work a cure, the diagnosis was wrong, and other exorcisms were employed until the right one was found. Merodach was much invoked in incantations, and one text represents him as going to his father Ea, the God of humanity, for instructions in the steps necessary to relieve suffering mankind from the troubles that beset them.

88. **OMENS.**—Among all primitive peoples there is ever a great desire to read the future, and means of telling what is to come are much sought after. This was the case in Babylonia and Assyria. Omen reading was not carried on by a few in secret, but was openly practised, and was an honourable profession employing many men. Almost every event in life was regarded as showing the future, if one could only read it. A great many omen tablets are preserved, and doubtless every temple had its omen lists, which would be studied by the novice, and consulted by the professional. Everything had its message, a peculiarity at birth, an accident while eating, the actions of animals, or any occurrence whatever. The heavens were carefully scanned each night, for in the stars was man's destiny written, and the restless planets in their wanderings traced out his life. No important work of any kind, public or private, was commenced without a favourable omen first being obtained. Dreams were naturally also full of meaning, hence

they were carefully watched, and were often induced under certain circumstances in order to find an omen thereby. (*Cf.* 2 Chron. i. 6, 7).

89. **TEMPLES AND PRIESTS.**—The Babylonians were very much more exclusively religious than the Assyrians, and among them the priesthood attained to great power and importance. In Assyria religion and its ministers were always kept well under the king's power, the priests being inferior state officials. The kings were themselves the vice-gerents of the gods, and all their conquests were done in the name and by the command and power of the gods. The temples in Babylonia were the most important buildings, and the kings pride themselves on their zeal in keeping these in repair. The temple proper was a ziggurat or tower (§ 81) situated on a high mound, and built in stages. The summit was flat; here the image of the god reposed in its shrine, and here the most sacred services were observed. These temples were often richly endowed; and, in addition to the revenues so derived, they received many gifts from devotees. The priests wielded great influence over the common people, not only in religious affairs, but in all departments of life. They were the fountains of law and justice, and they had great business interests especially in connection with the temples. The priests were necessary at every step in life, from the reading of the omens at birth to the exorcism of evil spirits at death.

90. **THE FUTURE LIFE.**—Like all Semites, the Babylonians had too much individuality to be satisfied with nothingness after death. But the



future was a dread, not a hope. The Babylonian looked for his reward in this life, in length of days, in a goodly heritage, in freedom from adversity, in communion with the gods, and above all in an enduring and prosperous posterity. When sore sickness and the shadow of death came upon them, great and piteous were the appeals made to the gods for favour and healing. Hades was an awful place, where even the good had a weary existence. Here the gods could not come, here they could not help; and "the bitterest drop in the cup of death was the knowledge that here the hand of the gods was shortened." Alone, all alone, must the soul cross the dark waters of the river of death, and abide in the utter loneliness of, "the land of darkness, and of the shadow of death, a land of darkness as darkness itself, a land of the shadow of death without any order, and where the light is as darkness" (Job x. 21, 22).

91. SHEOL.—The place of the dead was called Aralu, or sometimes Shu'alu (Hebrew, Sheol), but, like our own kindly Scots folk, they liked not to talk of their "lang hame," by any blunt, cold name, and many euphuistic expressions designating death are found. Aralu lay either under the earth, or in the heart of the mountain of the gods. It was surrounded by seven great walls, while outside all flowed the gloomy river of death, across which the dead were ferried, but which there was no recrossing. The god of the lower world was Nergal (§ 85), but the real ruler was Allatu, the merciless mistress. Nergal was made a god simply that Allatu might have a hus-

band, but in the administration of the kingdom he had nought to do. His part was, as the god of war and pestilence, to send a plentiful supply of subjects to his spouse.

92. **THE STATE OF THE DEAD.**—Without burial no soul was received in Aralu ; it was an outcast, and became a monster so frightful in mien, that to see it was to die from fear. It prowled around seeking to avenge itself on the living who had neglected its burial ; especially did it seek to enter its old home, and if it secured an entrance it would tear the inmates limb from limb. Vengeance and hate could go beyond death, for to mutilate the body ensured that the dead should go to Aralu dismembered. The dead, after being buried, was ferried across the river of death to the gates. At each of the seven successive gates the porter removed some article of clothing, till “naked as to the earth he came,” he entered the judgment hall, and stood before the dread Allatu, fierce of aspect, and suckling lion cubs at her breast. The wicked were consumed by loathly leprosy and other torments, but even the righteous had no pleasure. In this land of darkness and dust there was no sympathy, no companionship, no freedom, no joy, uncared for, and uncaring they must endure this rayless existence (*cf.* Isa. xiv.).

93. **THE DESCENT OF ISHTAR TO HADES**  
—A poem, telling how the goddess Ishtar went down to Aralu, probably to rescue her husband Tammuz, gives much information about the Babylonian doctrines of the hereafter :

To the land without return, to the land that thou knowest,

Ishtar the daughter of Sîn directed her purpose,  
Directed the daughter of Sîn her thoughts,  
To the house of darkness, the dwelling of Irkallu,  
To the house, whence he who enters, comes no more forth.

To the path without return to him who treads it.  
To the house where all who enter are deprived of light,

To the place where dust is their nourishment their food clay,

The light they see not, in deep darkness they dwell.

And like birds are they clothed in a garment of feathers.

When Ishtar reached the gate of the land without return,

To the porter at the gate she spake :

“ Watchman of the waters open thy gate,

Open thy gate,—I will enter.

If thou openest not thy gate—if thou refusest admission,

I will smash the door, break the bolts,

I will smash the threshold, pull up the door posts,

I will raise up the dead to eat the living,

Until the dead be more than the living.”

The porter hastened to Allatu, and told her who demanded admittance. He was ordered to admit the goddess, but to deal with her according to the ancient custom. He opened the first gate, and as she entered he removed her crown. “ Why, oh porter, removest thou the great crown from my head ? ” she asked. And he answered that it was Allatu’s command. At each gate some portion of her divine attire was removed, until at last

naked she stood before Allatu, who ordered Namtar, her messenger, to smite the goddess with disease in all parts of her body. "With disease of the eye smite her, with disease of the body, of the head, of the heart smite her."

94. **THE RETURN OF ISHTAR.**—With the departure of the goddess from her place and rule, desolation began to rule upon the earth. All love and passion were dead, and productivity ceased among man and beast. The gods in heaven were in dismay, for if the race of men cease to be, offerings to the gods too will cease. Ea came to the rescue. "Ea, in his wisdom, created Uddushunamir, a divine servant," and to him he gave power to enter Aralu, and sent him there to demand the release of Ishtar. Allatu was greatly enraged; she smote her sides, she bit her fingers. She said, "Forth Uddushunamir, or I will curse thee with a fearful curse. The filth of the city shall be thy food, its sewers thy drink!" But Ea must be obeyed, and Namtar was ordered to break open the spring of the waters of life, sprinkle Ishtar with them, and take her away. This was done, and at each successive gate she received back the garment there removed, until at the last gate she emerged again in her full beauty. This story is a nature myth, representing the gradual decay of autumn, the death of winter, the clothing of the world with vegetation in the spring, and the glorious resurrected life of summer.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## WRITING AND LITERATURE.

95. **WRITING SIGNS.**—All systems of writing were at first picture-writing, the word for man or lion was a picture of a man or lion, and so on. But there is a tendency always to conventional forms, which may ultimately issue in alphabets, as in the Phœnician, which is the original of our own alphabet, although the Phœnicians were not the inventors of the system. The Babylonian pictures early became conventional in form; in many cases it is hard to distinguish the picture in them, but strange to say it never attained to an alphabet, although coming in contact in later times with the Aramæan alphabetic writing. The signs, however, soon became insufficient to express all the new ideas, and objects introduced by a rapidly growing civilization. The combination of different signs also proved insufficient, and gradually the signs took on a syllabic value, *i.e.* a sign stood for a syllable in a word, and not for a word itself (ideograph). The basis of the written Babylonian character is the wedge, and hence the name given to it “cuneiform” (*cuneus*, a wedge). The following line will illustrate the methods of the combination of these wedges in writing. It is the first line of the Creation Story :

E - nu - ma  
When

e - lish la  
above not

na - bu - u  
were named

sha - ma - mu  
the heavens <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Not to be named or not to have a name is, according to Semitic ideas, equivalent to non-existent.

In this line every sign represents a syllable; but while some of them, like *na* and *ma*, have only a syllabic meaning, others may be in other writings a word: thus "*mu*," the last sign, has also the meanings "*shumu*" a name, and "*zakaru*" to speak, and only the context can tell what is the value of the sign. In the earliest form of the Babylonian there is no trace of the wedge, and the signs are pictures: thus the sign for heaven, God and high, is an eight-pointed star; the sign for the sun is a circle; the sign for a bull is a bull's head with horns. Some characters are combinations: the sign for water, placed within that for mouth, gave a character meaning "to drink"; the sign for mountain, within that for ox, produced one meaning "wild ox," and other like combinations were made. The cuneiform writing is a development from this pictorial stage.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Our alphabet is probably a development from the cuneiform through the Phœnician and the Greek. It has been commonly held that the Phœnician alphabet was derived from certain Egyptian hieroglyphs, but neither the signs nor their names suit such an origin. We have also already seen that the Babylonian language and writing signs were not only well known in Western Asia, but were in common use at the very time when the Egyptians held sway there, and when they would be most likely to influence the peoples there (§§ 17, 18.) As Egypt itself used to a very great extent the Babylonian style of writing, it is very improbable that other nations would adopt the Egyptian, especially when it is remembered that the peoples in Syria were in many ways superior to the Egyptians in culture (*cf.* Petrie, "History of Egypt"). When the influence of Babylonia declined in the Westland, the Aramæans, a nation of traders, came into prominence. As commerce is always the first to feel the need of the art of writing, it is most likely to this people we owe our alphabet. They already knew the cuneiform writing, and could easily develop from it an alphabet, as the Persians did later. The nomadic character of many of the

96. DECIPHERMENT.—The story of the decipherment of these strange characters is an interesting one. After the conquest of Babylonia, the Persians adopted the cuneiform method of writing, but instead of employing several hundred signs, they employed only thirty-nine, each of which represented a certain sound, that is, each had a single alphabetic value. When a Persian king set up an inscription, he wrote it not only in Persian, but copied it in Babylonian, and in Susian, which also employed the cuneiform system. It will thus be seen that if one of these inscriptions be deciphered, the key is found to the others. The Persian was the first to be read. This was done by taking two inscriptions which were found to coincide throughout, except in certain groups of signs, which might be taken as proper names. The groups came in such an order on the two inscriptions, that they inferred that one king must be the son of another. By trying these signs with the names of Persian kings, Hystaspes, Darius, and Xerxes were found to fit the characters admirably. Thus many of the values of the Persian signs were found, and working from this, gradually all

signs and their names suggest an Aramæan origin rather than a Phœnician, but the latter people, the sea traders, being in constant communication with the former, the inland traders, would very quickly adopt such a convenience. When the savages of Greece adopted the civilisation of the Phœnicians, one of the most important things they received was the alphabet, which constitutes, if our conclusions be correct, another strong link binding us to the ancient Babylonians. (For a discussion of this whole subject, in favour of an Egyptian origin, see "Dict. of Bible," art. Alphabet, and for an Aramæan origin, MacCurdy, "History, Prophecy and the Monuments," iii. pp. 24-29.)

were deciphered. Having thus found the Persian, the Babylonian did not give so much trouble, and was in time also deciphered, though there are a few signs, the meanings of which are not yet known, or are not certain. The greatest name in the story of the decipherment of the Babylonian is Sir Henry Rawlinson.

97. **WRITING MATERIALS.**—The material used for writing upon was clay. This was carefully prepared, and shaped into a tablet. A scribe, employing a stylus, then wrote out upon this very closely, and upon both sides, whatever the contents were to be. They seem when writing upon the reverse side of the tablet, to have rested it upon small pegs, to prevent the writing upon the first side being rubbed. The tablet was then baked in some special way, which gave it great hardness. The book thus produced was almost indestructible in the ordinary course of events. Fire or water had little effect upon it, and unless completely pulverized, even when broken in pieces, it could be made use of. Tens of thousands of these tablets have been found, either whole or in fragments. In the library of Assurbanipal alone, over thirty thousand were found, and in the ruins at Tello (§ 11) many thousands have lately been unearthed.

98. **CONTENTS.**—These books cover a great variety of subjects, there are treatises on history, religion, law, omens, legends, myths, traditions, astronomy, mathematics, botany, and zoology, besides business documents, school books, and pronouncing vocabularies. The historical documents



are sometimes very long, and at other times consist of little more than the name and titles of the king. These last, when not marking the ownership of bricks, are written on circular stones perforated through the centre, and used as seals. In addition these bear the "coat of arms" of the king to whom they belonged, and are often beautifully engraved. The writing of all kinds was done by the official scribes, a numerous and honourable class, whose services were requisitioned whenever any agreement was to be made. Every loan, every contract of marriage, transfer of property, sale of a slave, or any transaction whatever was written out in full legal phraseology, and signed or sealed by the contracting parties and witnesses. These contract tablets are found in great numbers, dating as far back as the time of Chammurabi. When there was danger of any document being tampered with, after being baked the tablet was covered all over with soft clay. The whole agreement was written out again upon this, and signed the same as the original one. This was then baked, so that in case of dispute the outer shell could be broken off, and its contents compared with the inner tablet.

99. **HYMNS.**—The hymns are often very beautiful and spiritual, although the effect is sometimes spoiled by finding that they are but parts of incantations. In places the language brings to mind similar expressions in the Psalms. In the oracle given to Esarhaddon, the god tells him, "Fear not, Esarhaddon, I, Bel, am with thee. I speak, the beams of thy heart I support (?) as thine own mother who bare thee. Sîn on thy right hand,

Shamash on thy left, sixty great gods round about thee shall stand. Put not thy trust in man ; look unto me, reverently regard me." The prayer offered by Nebuchadnezzar at his coronation is especially beautiful, and might well be offered by a king of the present day, if directed to the true God. The following is a translation :

O, Eternal Ruler, Lord of the Universe,  
Grant that the name of the king whom Thou lovest,  
Whose name Thou hast mentioned may flourish as seems  
good to Thee,  
Lead him in a plain path.<sup>1</sup>  
I am the ruler who obeys Thee, the creature of Thy hand,  
It is Thou who hast created me.  
And Thou hast entrusted to me sovereignty over mankind.  
According to Thy mercy, O Lord, which Thou bestowest  
on all,  
Cause me to love Thy sovereign rule,  
Let the fear of Thy Godhead dwell in my heart,  
Grant to me whatsoever may seem good to Thee,  
Since it is Thou who dost control my life.

100. **PENITENTIAL PSALMS.**—In these psalms a view of sin and moral responsibility very rare among pagan peoples is seen. In a prayer to Ishtar the penitent says :

I, Thy servant, full of sighs call upon Thee,  
The fervent prayer of the sinner do Thou accept,  
If Thou lookest upon a man that man lives,  
Oh ! all-powerful Mistress of Mankind,  
Merciful One, to whom it is good to turn, who hearest  
sighs.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ps. xxvii. 11. The words for "plain" are from the same root in both prayers.

The worshipper, afflicted like Job, finds no one to help him.

God in the anger of His heart hath visited me.  
I seek for help, but no one takes me by the hand,  
I weep, but no one approaches me,  
I cry aloud, but none attend to my cry,  
Full of woe, I lie in the dust, I raise not myself.

This latter psalm ends with an impassioned appeal to God for mercy :

The sin I have committed change to mercy,  
The wrong I have done may the winds carry away,  
Rend as a garment my many transgressions,  
My God, my sins are seven times seven, forgive my sins.

**101. MYTHS AND LEGENDS.**—The Semites have never been a philosophical people. God doeth all things, there is therefore no need to seek out other causes. It used to be also said that they were too unimaginative to create myths, but the fragments already found disprove that charge. Besides the Adapu myth, and the "Descent of Ishtar," already mentioned (§§ 79, 93), there are several others. One legend tells of Etana, "the strong one," who may be the Ethan of 1 Kings iv. 31, the name probably being a famous one in the traditions of the East. Only two fragments of this story remain. One relates the story of his search for the plant of birth, the other of his attempt to reach heaven. The eagle carries him up, his breast to its breast, his palms on its pinions, his side on its side. They mount and mount until the sea around the earth appears but as a gardener's ditch,

when suddenly they are thrown with lightning speed from the giddy heights. In another story the eagle is destroyed by the counsel of Shamash. In spite of the warning of one of his young, the eagle kills the serpent's brood. Shamash appealed to, counsels the serpent to hide in the body of a dead ox. The foolish and wilful father again disobeys the counsels of his wise child, and is seized and destroyed by the serpent. Another myth tells how on one occasion Zu, the storm bird, managed to secure an entrance into heaven, where he snatched the "tablets of destiny" from Bel, and flew off with them. He hid himself in the dark mountains, and the tablets were recovered only after great labour.

102. **THE GILGAMESH EPIC.**—The greatest literary work in Babylonia or Assyria is an epic in twelve books, relating the story of the hero Gilgamesh (Izdubar, by the syllabic reading). This hero may have been, and probably was, a real personage, but as around the name of Arthur, so around his name, gathered many legends and traditions, which were finally collected and written up in twelve books, one for each of the signs of the Zodiac, while the hero himself is transformed into a minor solar deity. The adventures of Gilgamesh are the originals of the "Labours of Hercules" and of the mythical accounts of Alexander. Several of the tablets are lacking, and of others only fragments remain. The city of Uruk-supuri (Erech the well-defended) is in great trouble, is all that can be read from the first tablet. In the following Gilgamesh appears as the saviour (some say

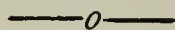


conqueror) of the city, and ruled in it without a rival. He took what and whom he pleased, until the elders in jealousy or despair appealed to the gods. They in turn appealed to Aruru, who took a bit of clay, and created Ea-bani, a powerful being, partly man, partly beast, who lived with the beasts of the field, eating grass with the gazelles.<sup>1</sup> Instead of being the enemy as intended, he is won over by a woman to visit Gilgamesh, and the two become firm friends. They are successful in driving out the Elamites, and their prowess becomes renowned. Ishtar the goddess becomes enamoured of the youthful hero, and makes proposals of marriage. "Come, Gilgamesh, and be my husband," she said, and held out many inducements. Gilgamesh rejected her with scorn, asking her concerning her former husbands whom she had killed, when grown weary of them. Ishtar enraged, demanded of Anu vengeance. Anu tried to pacify her, but failed, so he sent the sacred bull against Gilgamesh. He, with the help of Ea-bani, killed the bull, and when Ishtar, more angry still, mounted the wall, and cursed Erech, they, full of the impudence of victory, flung the carcass in her face. But the goddess took fearful vengeance. As they were celebrating the victory over the bull in a great feast they were stricken with sore and foul disease. In twelve days Ea-bani died, and Gilgamesh could find no healing. As an only hope he determined to try to seek out Pir-napishti

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the condition of Nebuchadrezzar during his madness, Dan. iv. 29-33.

(§ 82), who after the flood had been made exempt from the common fate of mankind, and was now dwelling in the islands of the blest. He set out, but the way was full of dangers. A great lion meets him, and he strangles it, and the same fate is given to a serpent. At Mt. Amashu, a place of terrors, he was greatly frightened by the scorpion men who guarded its entrance ; but they allowed him to pass. At last he reached the great sea where the maiden Sabitu had her castle. She refused him permission to cross the sea, but he softened her heart with the pitiable tale of his woes. Arad-Ea the boatman had next to be won, and his opposition was removed by the same sad story. They embarked, and after a month and a half, they reached the dread and dangerous waters of death, which were successfully crossed. Pir-napishti was astounded to see a living man come across the dark waters, and listened sympathetically as Gilgamesh pours out the story of his sorrows, and pleaded for healing and freedom from death. But Pir-napishti reluctantly had to tell him his quest was hopeless "so long as houses are built and friendships and enmities exist," so long must all mankind die, for "death alone knows no death." Gilgamesh then asked how if that be true, he had escaped, and Pir-napishti relates the story of the Deluge (§ 82). The story ended, Gilgamesh was put to sleep, and the magic food prepared which should restore him to health. But when he was healed, he was still mortal, and immunity from death could only be obtained by eating of a plant, "the restorer of youth to old age," which grew

by a far distant fountain. With the help of Arad-Ea the spring was reached, but scarcely had Gilgamesh grasped his desire than it was snatched out of his hands by an evil spirit in the shape of a serpent. The disappointed man wept bitterly, but tears were in vain, he had to return, healed, it is true, but mortal, as he came.



## CHAPTER XV.

### CIVILIZATION.

103. **THE SUMERIANS.**—It is still a matter of dispute among Assyriologists whether the civilization of the Euphrates valley be of Semitic or of non-Semitic origin. Many, perhaps the majority, certainly the majority of English-speaking scholars, hold that before ever the Babylonians came into the land there was already there a large non-Semitic population among whom civilization had made great advance. According to this hypothesis these aborigines had invented the art of writing, and had made considerable progress in it. The nomad Semites, like their brethren of Israel, when they became a settled people took possession of “houses which they had not builded and of vineyards they had not planted.” They adopted the civilization of the land they conquered and made it their own. That this theory is a correct one is supposed to be seen in the existence in Babylonia until quite late times of a non-Semitic language. This speech is used especially

for religious purposes, and was the language of the original inhabitants of the land. Being the tongue used for the religious services, it was adopted by the immigrants as the sacred tongue. Whatever doubt there may have formerly been has, it is said, been removed by the discovery of great numbers of tablets in this language in Tello (Lagash), one of the most ancient cities. Very frequently tablets are bilingual, one line being in Assyrian and repeated in this language. Statues showing non-Semitic types have also been found. The name given to this people is Sumerian, or Akkadian, from the ancient names of the land (§ 10).

104. **SCEPTICAL OPINIONS.** — But many students are unable to acquiesce in the above conclusions, and hold that the Sumerian is really an artificial language invented by the priests and scribes, and is more or less a priestly code. On close examination certain regular interchanges of letters or sounds are seen to take place which would not be there were they entirely different languages. It is very improbable that the language of a completely conquered and absorbed people should be adopted as the sacred tongue of the conquerors. If the Sumerians had attained to such an advanced civilization, it is strange that they should have left no trace of their influence upon the grammar of the Babylonian, which is purely Semitic. If Petrie's date for the first dynasty of Egypt (4777 B.C.) be even approximately correct, then the Semitic settlement must have been very much earlier, for,



as the Egyptian grammar and religion show, the early Egyptians were greatly influenced by the Semites. This would throw the Sumerians still further back into antiquity and make it much less probable that a foreign language would live as the language of priests and religion. The supreme antiquity of Lagash and its sister cities is open to question. It must be decided first by geology if it is ever decided, for the Persian Gulf is gradually receding, and in the time claimed for the rule of Lagash, some think its site was under water. Even should the statues be non-Semitic in type, which is doubtful, it proves nothing, as time and again foreigners bore rule in Babylonia. The purity of the Assyrian offshoot would also seem to imply the purity of the ancient Babylonian stock.

**105. THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION.**—Such is the state of the question as it stands at the present time, and there is no likelihood of its early settlement. It must be remembered that although some writers of vivid imagination speak of the Sumerians and Akkadians as if they were as well and minutely known as the later Romans, yet so far their existence is merely a theory invented to explain and account for certain phenomena. The hypothesis may be the correct one, and again it may not. Certain it is, in whatever way it had its rise, our western civilization was cradled in the valley of the Euphrates, as the Book of Genesis teaches (Gen. ii.).

**106. ASTRONOMY.**—In science the greatest advance was made in astronomy, and to-day many

of the terms then used are still employed. Astrology more than pure science was the original motive for the incessant study of the heavens, but the results are none the less valuable. Pure astronomy, however, also existed, especially in later times. In Babylonia, the ziggurats, and in Assyria specially constructed observatories, were employed, and from these every night the heavens were scanned by the astronomers. Many reports of these have been discovered, and as the astronomer, as a rule, signs his name, we know that there were several important astronomical schools. From Babylonia, Egypt, Europe, and Western Asia derived their first knowledge of astronomy, and some claim that India and China also got their beginnings of this science from the same source. The Babylonians had observed that the heavenly bodies move according to settled laws, and they calculated the time of the appearance of the new moon, and solar and lunar eclipses. Their calculations were often wrong, for one astronomical report records the failure of an expected eclipse. They noted the course of the planets, "the wandering sheep of the sun," who, with the sun and the moon, were their chief deities, the sacred seven. Many of the fixed stars were also named, and very early the imagination saw them grouped in shapes and figures, probably more in the conventional form of the ideographs than of the animal or object itself. The stars were thus grouped in constellations, the principal ones being the twelve houses of the sun. The names and figures of most of those still used on our charts of the heavens are those brought into

use by the Babylonians. The twelve cantos of the Gilgamesh Epic are undoubtedly named after the twelve signs of the zodiac, and represent the course of the sun through these constellations which they figured to themselves as the twelve stages of his annual career. In the recovered portions of the work are found :—The Bull (Taurus, Canto ii.); the Lion (Leo, Canto v.); the Mission of Ishtar (Virgo, Canto vi., the sixth month in the Assyrian calendar bearing the name “Shipir Ishtar” Ishtar’s Sending); the Scorpion Men (Scorpio, Canto viii.); and the Deluge (Aquarius, Canto xi.). The names and the order in which they come are thus the same as those with which we are familiar.

107. **RECKONING OF TIME.**—From their astronomical knowledge the Babylonians were able to form a calendar. From earliest times they divided the year into twelve months of thirty days each, and by means of intercalary months, kept the lunar year exact with the solar year. The day was divided into twelve *kasbê*, or double hours, of sixty minutes each. The number sixty was a common unit of calculation, and our division of the circle into 360 parts is ultimately to be traced to the Babylonians. A table of the squares and cubes of the numbers one to sixty, and a series of geometrical figures have also been found.

108. **ARCHITECTURE**—In Babylonia the building material used was brick made of clay mixed with chopped straw and baked in the sun or in kilns. The temples were not orientated as in Egypt, though some seem to have had their corners directed to the four chief points. In Assyria,

where stone could be found, it was much employed. In the north land the temple occupied a subordinate part, and the palace was the chief building. It was also a fortress, and could be defended long after the city in which it stood was taken. Every palace stood upon a high artificial mound, probably a remnant from the low-lying flat lands of Babylonia. These mounds were enormous, and must have taken many years of the labour of a great multitude of captives. The features of some of the men represented at work on one of these mounds show that some of Israel's exiles were thus employed. The interior of the palace was decorated with mural inscriptions, pictures of scenes from history, legend and myth, and conventional designs of great beauty carved in relief. In Babylonia a common decoration was made of different coloured cones imbedded in clay, which had been spread soft upon the walls.

109. **COMMERCE AND AGRICULTURE.**—The records show the Babylonians to have been a commercial people, seeking wealth with a whole heart. Their market extended from India to Egypt. Commercialism is always accompanied by money-borrowing and constant appeals to the law. There are in the different museums business documents and legal reports extending back to a great antiquity. These record sales of property, descriptions of farms or building lots, borrowing on interest, rates of interest—in short, everything that belongs to business in a civilised community. A Babylonian or Assyrian ran his cylinder over the soft clay and thus affixed his seal to a document.



Every noble or wealthy man had one of these seal-cylinders, and many have come down to us. The poorer merchants or artisans did not carry cylinders, but attested a document by impressing their thumb nail on the soft clay. Agriculture flourished in Babylonia where the land was very fertile, and rendered more so by the careful system of irrigation. The farmers were evidently an important part of the community, and at the time of Herodotus the produce of the soil in Babylonia is calculated to have been a third of all produced in western Asia. In Assyria the land was also fertile, but there the farming seems to have been left to the care of slaves, and hence never attained to the prominence it did in the south country.

110. PLACE OF WOMAN.—The laws of marriage and divorce were very much the same as they have generally been in the east. The wife was more or less the property of the husband and could be divorced by a mere declaration. Yet, as was inevitable among a commercial people, woman attained to comparative freedom, at all events in later times. She could hold and inherit property, could carry on business, and could testify in a court of law. The report of the civil case brought by the widow Bunanitu before six judges of the supreme court in the reign of Nabonidos throws a good deal of light on the status of woman. On the death of her husband, his brother claimed his property. Bunanitu thereupon appealed to the Court, and in her testimony told the amount of her dowry, and how she and her husband ("I and my") had traded with this, how they had bought property,

and raised some of the money on a joint note or mortgage. Before he died her husband declared she should be his heir. On these grounds she claimed the property of the deceased, and the judges gave decision in her favour. In the palace no such freedom existed; the wives were royal prisoners confined to the harem, and had no voice publicly in the affairs of state.

III. THE STATUS OF SLAVES.—Because of the captivity of the Hebrews and all that it meant in the development of our religion, the status of slaves in Babylonia is of interest to us. Slavery in the ancient East was seldom so degrading as it has been in modern Christendom, although often equally cruel. Except that slaves had no civic rights, and had not full control of their own labour, they were regarded in the household and in society as being in all other ways the equals of freemen. A slave could attain to comparative wealth, to independence, or to high positions of trust and power, and a freed or enfranchised slave had no stigma attached to his name.<sup>1</sup> In Babylonia, because of the advance of civilization and the mildness of Nebuchadnezzar, the condition of slaves was comparatively free from hardship, as free as in any system of slavery it can ever be. "In Babylonia, slaves generally, even those who were originally state prisoners, had the chance of rising through

<sup>1</sup> The officer of the Sultan in charge of the pilgrim caravan with which Burton made his famous pilgrimage to Mecca was in common parlance "a slave of a slave." Musa ibn Nosair, the general of Mohammed and the conqueror of Africa, had been a slave, and in turn became the owner of thousands of slaves.

the several grades of servitude, and bettering their condition by sale, by endowment, by legacy ; they could become free by their own purchase, or by redemption through another, or by the generosity of their masters ; they could be adopted into the family of an owner and eventually succeed to the possession of great estates ; by a very common form of business contract they were when hired out by their masters entitled not only to compensation during sickness or for injuries, but also to remuneration for their labour, so that it was possible for them to accumulate a small capital and acquire slaves of their own ; moreover, they could become skilled craftsmen by a course of legal apprenticeship.”<sup>1</sup> The exiles, although at first state slaves, and therefore employed in the public works of the land, could nevertheless improve their position, and in time attain to the freedom of Babylonian citizens. Even as slaves, however, the most of them had comparative liberty, and this explains the narrative in Ezekiel, where the captives seem to have had more freedom than according to our conception slaves could enjoy (Ezek. viii. 20 ; cp. Jer. xxix. 4 ff.). The mildness of slavery and the opportunities it gave for acquiring property and for enfranchisement, probably account for the unwillingness of so many to return to Judah when the opportunity was given them by Cyrus.

112. PAST AND PRESENT.—Such, then, in

<sup>1</sup> MacCurdy, “History, Prophecy and the Monuments,” iii. p. 328. I should like here to express my indebtedness to Prof. MacCurdy for much valuable assistance in the preparation of this little work.

briefest outline is part of the story of this ancient people, who for so many millenniums was the first power among the nations of the earth. Civilization owes more to this race than to any other which has yet arisen, for to the Babylonians it owes not only much progress, but its beginnings. Looking at the Euphrates valley to-day under the rule of the Turk after the past centuries of dependence with the accompanying wars, political and religious, it is scarcely possible to conceive that this dreary land, inhabited by a few poverty-stricken folk, was, for thrice as many centuries as Britain can trace her history, the seat of a populous empire, in some ways the most magnificent the world has ever seen.

113. REVIEW OF CIVILISATION.—In feats of arms this people had great renown, for they overcame difficulties seemingly insurmountable, and their large armies were so mobile that the rapidity with which they moved could be likened to nothing else than flying (Isa. v. 26-28 ; xli. 2, 3 ; Hab. i. 6-8). But greater and more wonderful were their achievements in the arts of peace. The land of Babylonia was one of the most progressive and successful farming communities that have ever existed, and this in itself marks a high stage in ancient civilisation. Lands were reclaimed from the marshes (cp. Isa. xiv. 23), and an elaborate system of canals protected the country and kept it fruitful. In the season when the mountain torrents came down, swelling the rivers, these prevented the overflowing of the Euphrates by carrying its superfluous waters over to the deeper-banked Tigris,



and in the dry season, by irrigating the farms, caused them to produce more than sufficient for the needs of the teeming population. Wheat was indigenous to the soil, but other food-producing plants were imported from distant countries, together with flowers and trees to beautify the land with pleasure parks and to vary the monotony of the plain. The low-lying, level, stoneless country of Babylonia made the erection of enduring buildings exceedingly difficult, and, as necessity is ever the mother of invention, the result is that their brick has never been surpassed in the qualities which give durability. The brickyards of modern times, with their elaborate machinery, seldom attempt to turn out pieces so large as some which were regularly made in the brickyards of this ancient land, for example, the cover of a peculiar kind of grave vault, now known as a dish-cover grave. So perfect was their mode of making and laying drain tiles that graves have been found which have been kept dry through three or four thousand years by means of drains put in when they were made. In Art they also showed their originality, though because they never learned how to place things in perspective, their representation of scenes appears to us to be very crude, but in the drawing of figures and in stone-cutting they have never been excelled. Their art, however, moves within a very limited circle, having to do almost entirely with themes and objects which will show force or action. Their laws, although very stringent, were in the main remarkably just, and seem to have been administered with a fairness unusual in the East.

Enough has already been said of their attainments in science, literature and religion to show that in these also the nations who came after received no small and unimportant heritage. This legacy has been handed down the ages in ever-increasing volume, as nation after nation has added to it what from its own genius it was able to contribute, so that the whole modern world is still largely under the control of the life and thought of ancient Babylonia and Assyria.

114. **CONCLUSION.**—The history of these ancient empires and the strange way in which their records and monuments have been preserved illustrate and attest the well-known doctrine of the Church, that “God executeth His decrees in the works of . . . providence.” Too long in practice and common regard the records embodied in the Old Testament have been valued as parables rather than as history. But now, thanks to the discoveries and recoveries of the past century, we are enabled to see Israel in its historic environment, and from its history trace in some measure the wonderful and divine development of religion among its people. And the fact that these records were hidden away until the time when they should be needed to confirm the credibility of the Bible, and make plain its story, strikingly illustrates how God is head over all things, and over-rules all things for the good of His Church.

## BOOKS WHICH MAY BE CONSULTED

- Sir H. Rawlinson—"Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia." (5 vols.)
- F. Delitzsch—"Assyrische Lesestücke." (3rd edition.)
- Abel und Winckler—"Keilschrifttexte."
- P. Haupt—"Nimrod Epos."
- E. Schrader—"Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek." (4 vols)
- A. Jeremias—"Izdubar-Nimrod."
- Do. "Leben nach dem Tode."
- F. E. Peiser—"Babylonische Verträge."
- H. Zimmern—"Babylonische Busspsalmen."
- Of the above, the first four are in the original cuneiform text, the fifth is a transliteration of the cuneiform with a German translation, the others are translations with notes. Of more general interest are the following. The first seven will be found of most value to the general student.
- J. F. MacCurdy—"History, Prophecy, and the Monuments." (3 vols.)
- R. W. Rogers—"History of Assyria and Babylonia." (New York, 1900.)
- C. P. Tiele—"Babylonisch-Assyrische Geschichte."
- Muerdter und Delitzsch—"Geschichte Assyrien und Babylonien."
- M. Jastrow—"Religion of Babylonia and Assyria. (Boston, 1898.)
- L. W. King—"Religion of Babylonia and Assyria."
- I. M. Price—"The Monuments and the Old Testament." (Chicago 1900.)
- Ed. Meyer—"Geschichte des Alterthums," vol. i.
- Fr. Kaulen—"Assyrien und Babylonien." (There is an English translation of this book.)
- P. Jensen—"Kosmologie."
- G. Smith—"Chaldæan Genesis."
- E. Schrader—"Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament."
- G. Maspero—"Dawn of Civilization."
- Do. "Ancient Egypt and Assyria."
- Z. Ragozin—"Chaldæa." (Story of the Nations series.)
- Do. "Assyria." Do.
- F. Delitzsch—"Wo Lag das Paradies?"
- A. H. Sayce—"Ancient Empires of the East."
- T. G. Pinches—"Guide to Nimrod saloon in British Museum "
- A. H. Layard—"Nineveh and its Remains."
- E. de Sarzec—"Découvertes en Chaldée."
- J. P. Peters—"Nippur, or Adventures, etc., on the Euphrates." (2 vols.)
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